



**THE**  
**LIFE**  
**OF**  
**SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.**





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**SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.**  
COMPREHENDING  
AN ACCOUNT OF HIS  
**STUDIES AND NUMEROUS WORKS,**  
IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER;

A SERIES OF HIS  
**EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE AND CONVERSATIONS**  
WITH MANY EMINENT PERSONS;

AND VARIOUS  
**ORIGINAL PIECES OF HIS COMPOSITION,**  
NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED:

THE WHOLE EXHIBITING  
A **Sketch of Literature and Literary Men in Great Britain**  
FOR NEAR HALF A CENTURY DURING WHICH HE FLOURISHED.

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**BY JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.**

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WITH **COPIOUS NOTES AND BIOGRAPHICAL ILLUSTRATIONS,**  
BY MALONE.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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ON Tuesday, March 26, there came for us an equipage properly suited to a wealthy well-beneficed clergyman: Dr. Taylor's large, roomy postchaise, drawn by four stout plump horses, and driven by two steady jolly postillions, which conveyed us to Ashbourne; where I found my friend's schoolfellow living upon an establishment perfectly corresponding with his substantial creditable equipage: his house, garden, pleasure-grounds, table, in short every thing good, and no scantiness appearing. Every man should form such a plan of living as he can execute completely. Let him not draw an outline wider than he can fill up. I have seen many skeletons of show and magnificence which excite at once ridicule and pity. Dr. Taylor had a good estate of his own, and good preferment in the church, being a prebendary of Westminster, and rector of Busworth. He was a diligent justice of the peace, and presided over the town of Ashbourne, to the inhabitants of which I was told he was very liberal; and as a proof of this it was mentioned to me, he had, the preceding winter, distributed two hundred pounds among such of



This was an observation deep and sure in human nature.

Next day we talked of a book in which an eminent judge was arraigned before the bar of the publick, as having pronounced an unjust decision in a great cause. . . Dr. Johnson maintained that this publication would not give any uneasiness to the judge. "For (said he), either he acted honestly, or he meant to do injustice. . . If he acted honestly, his own consciousness will protect him; if he meant to do injustice, he will be glad to see the man who attacks him so much vexed."

Next day, as Dr. Johnson had acquainted Dr. Taylor of the reason for his returning speedily to London, it was resolved that we should set out after dinner. A few of Dr. Taylor's neighbours were his guests that day.

Dr. Johnson talked with approbation of one who had attained to the state of the philosophical wise man, that is, to have no want of any thing. "Then, sir (said I), the savage is a wise man." "Sir (said he), I do not mean simply being without,—but not having a want." I maintained, against this proposition, that it was better to have fine clothes, for instance, than not to feel the want of them. JOHNSON. "No, sir; fine clothes are good only as they supply the want of other means of procuring respect. Was Charles the Twelfth, think you, less respected for his coarse blue coat and black stock? And you find the King of Prussia dresses plain, because the dignity of his character is sufficient." I here brought myself into a scrape, for I heedlessly said, "Would not *you*, sir, be the better for velvet embroidery?" JOHNSON. "Sir, you put an end to all argument when you introduce your opponent himself. Have you no better manners?"

There is *your want*." I apologized by saying, I had mentioned him as an instance of one who wanted as little as any man in the world, and yet, perhaps, might receive some additional lustre from dress.

Having left Ashbourne in the evening, we stopped to change horses at Derby, and availed ourselves of a moment to enjoy the conversation of my countryman, Dr. Butter, then physician there. He was in great indignation because Lord Mountstuart's bill for a Scotch militia had been lost. Dr. Johnson was as violent against it. "I am glad (said he), that Parliament has had the spirit to throw it out. You wanted to take advantage of the timidity of our scoundrels" (meaning, I suppose, the ministry). It may be observed, that he used the epithet scoundrel very commonly, not quite in the sense in which it is generally understood, but as a strong term of disapprobation; as when he abruptly answered Mrs. Thrale, who had asked him how he did, "Ready to become a scoundrel, madam; with a little more spoiling you will, I think, make me a complete rascal<sup>1</sup>:"—he meant, easy to become a capricious and self-indulgent valetudinarian; a character for which I have heard him express great disgust.

Johnson had with him upon this jaunt, "*Il Palmerino d'Inghilterra*," a romance praised by Cervantes; but did not like it much. He said, he read it for the language, by way of preparation for his Italian expedition.—We lay this night at Loughborough.

On Thursday, March 28, we pursued our journey. I mentioned that old Mr. Sheridan complained of the ingratitude of Mr. Wedderburne and General Fraser, who had been much obliged

<sup>1</sup> Anecdotes of Johnson, p. 176.

to him when they were young Scotchmen entering upon life in England. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, a man is very apt to complain of the ingratitude of those who have risen far above him. A man, when he gets into a higher sphere, into other habits of life, cannot keep up all his former connections. Then, sir, those who knew him formerly upon a level with themselves may think that they ought still to be treated as on a level, which cannot be; and an acquaintance in a former situation may bring out things which it would be very disagreeable to have mentioned before higher company, though, perhaps, every body knows of them." He placed this subject in a new light to me, and showed that a man who has risen in the world must not be condemned too harshly for being distant to former acquaintance, even though he may have been much obliged to them. It is, no doubt, to be wished that a proper degree of attention should be shown by great men to their early friends. But if, either from obtuse insensibility to difference of situation, or presumptuous forwardness, which will not submit even to an exterior observance of it, the dignity of high place cannot be preserved, when they are admitted into the company of those raised above the state in which they once were, encroachment must be repelled and the kinder feelings sacrificed. To one of the very fortunate persons whom I have mentioned, namely, Mr. Wedderburne, now Lord Loughborough, I must do the justice to relate, that I have been assured by another early acquaintance of his, old Mr. Macklin, who assisted in improving his pronunciation, that he found him very grateful.—Macklin, I suppose, had not pressed upon his elevation with so much eagerness as the gentleman who complained of him. Dr. Johnson's re-



mark as to the jealousy entertained of our friends who rise far above us is certainly very just. By this was withered the early friendship between Charles Townshend and Akenside; and many similar instances might be adduced.

He said, "It is commonly a weak man who marries for love." We then talked of marrying women of fortune; and I mentioned a common remark, that a man may be, upon the whole, richer by marrying a woman with a very small portion, because a woman of fortune will be proportionally expensive: whereas a woman who brings none will be very moderate in expenses. JOHNSON. "Depend upon it, sir, this is not true. A woman of fortune, being used to the handling of money, spends it judiciously: but a woman who gets the command of money for the first time upon her marriage, has such a gust in spending it that she throws it away with great profusion."

He praised the ladies of the present age, insisting that they were more faithful to their husbands, and more virtuous in every respect than in former times, because their understandings were better cultivated. It was an undoubted proof of his good sense and good disposition that he was never querulous, never prone to inveigh against the present times, as is so common when superficial minds are on the fret. On the contrary, he was willing to speak favourably of his own age; and, indeed, maintained its superiority in every respect, except in its reverence for government; the relaxation of which he imputed, as its grand cause, to the shock which our monarchy received at the Revolution, though necessary; and, secondly, to the timid concessions made to faction by successive administrations in the reign of his present Majesty. I am happy to

think that he lived to see the Crown at last recover its just influence.

At Leicester we read in the newspaper that Dr. James was dead. I thought that the death of an old schoolfellow, and one with whom he had lived a good deal in London, would have affected my fellow traveller much: but he only said, "Ah! poor Jamy." Afterwards, however, when we were in the chaise, he said, with more tenderness, "Since I set out on this jaunt I have lost an old friend and a young one;—Dr. James and poor Harry" (meaning Mr. Thrale's son).

∴ Having lain at St. Alban's, on Thursday, March 28, we breakfasted the next morning at Barnet. I expressed to him a weakness of mind which I could not help; an uneasy apprehension that my wife and children, who were at a great distance from me, might, perhaps, be ill. "Sir (said he), consider how foolish you would think it in *them* to be apprehensive that *you* are ill." This sudden turn relieved me for the moment; but I afterwards perceived it to be an ingenious fallacy\*. I might, to be sure, be satisfied that they had no reason to be apprehensive about me, because I *knew* that I myself was well: but we might have a mutual anxiety without the charge of folly; because each was, in some degree, uncertain as to the condition of the other.

I enjoyed the luxury of our approach to London, that metropolis which we both loved so much, for the high and varied intellectual pleasure which it furnishes. I experienced imme-

\* [Surely it is no fallacy, but a sound and rational argument. He who is perfectly well, and apprehensive concerning the state of another at a distance from him, *knows* to a certainty that the fears of that person concerning *his* health are imaginary and delusive; and hence has a rational ground for supposing that his own apprehensions concerning his absent wife or friend are equally unfounded: M.]

diate happiness while whirled along with such a companion, and said to him, "Sir, you observed one day at General Oglethorpe's, that a man is never happy for the present but when he is drunk. Will you not add,—or when driving rapidly in a postchaise?" JOHNSON. "No, sir, you are driving rapidly *from* something or *to* something."

Talking of melancholy, he said, "Some men, and very thinking men too, have not those vexing thoughts<sup>2</sup>. Sir Joshua Reynolds is the same all the year round. Beauchamp, except when ill and in pain, is the same. But I believe most men have them in the degree in which they are capable of having them. If I were in the country, and were distressed by that malady, I would force myself to take a book; and every time I did it I should find it the easier. Melancholy, indeed, should be diverted by every means but drinking."

We stopped at Messieurs Dillys, booksellers in the Poultry; from whence he hurried away, in a hackney coach, to Mr. Thrale's in the Borough. I called at his house in the evening, having promised to acquaint Mrs. Williams of his safe return; when, to my surprise, I found him sitting with her at tea, and, as I thought, not in a very

<sup>2</sup> The phrase "vexing thoughts," is, I think, very expressive. It has been familiar to me from my childhood; for it is to be found in the "Psalms in Metre," used in the churches (I believe I should say *kirk*s) of Scotland, Psalm xliii. 5.

"Why art thou then cast down, my soul?

What should discourage thee?

And why with *vexing thoughts* art thou

Disquieted in me?"

Some allowance must no doubt be made for early prepossession. But at a maturer period of life, after looking at various metrical versions of the Psalms, I am well satisfied that the version used in Scotland is, upon the whole, the best; and that it is vain to think of having a better. It has in general a simplicity and *unction* of sacred Poetry; and in many parts its transference is admirable.

good humour: for, it seems, when he had got to Mr. Thrale's, he found the coach was at the door waiting to carry Mrs. and Miss Thrale, and Signor Baretti, their Italian master, to Bath. This was not showing the attention which might have been expected to the "Guide, Philosopher, and Friend;" the *Imlac* who had hastened from the country to console a distressed mother, who he understood was very anxious for his return.— They had, I found, without ceremony, proceeded on their intended journey. I was glad to understand from him that it was still resolved that his tour to Italy with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale should take place, of which he had entertained some doubt, on account of the loss which they had suffered; and his doubts afterwards appeared to be well founded. He observed, indeed very justly, that "their loss was an additional reason for their going abroad; and if it had not been fixed that he should have been one of the party, he would force them out; but he would not advise them unless his advice was asked, lest they might suspect that he recommended what he wished on his own account." I was not pleased that his intimacy with Mr. Thrale's family, though it no doubt contributed much to his comfort and enjoyment, was not without some degree of restraint: not, as has been grossly suggested, that it was required of him as a task to talk for the entertainment of them and their company; but that he was not quite at his ease; which, however, might partly be owing to his own honest pride—that dignity of mind which is always jealous of appearing too compliant.

On Sunday, March 31, I called on him, and showed him as a curiosity which I had discovered, his "Translation of Lobo's Account of Abyssinia," which Sir John Pringle had lent me,

it being then little known as one of his works. He said, "Take no notice of it," or "don't talk of it." He seemed to think it beneath him, though done at six and twenty. I said to him, "Your style, sir, is much improved since you translated this." He answered with a sort of triumphant smile, "Sir, I hope it is."

On Wednesday, April 3, in the morning, I found him very busy putting his books in order, and as they were generally very old ones, clouds of dust were flying around him. He had on a pair of large gloves such as hedgers use. His present appearance put me in mind of my uncle Dr. Boswell's description of him, "A robust genius, born to grapple with whole libraries."

I gave him an account of a conversation which had passed between me and Captain Cook, the day before, at dinner at Sir John Pringle's; and he was much pleased with the conscientious accuracy of that celebrated circumnavigator, who set me right as to many of the exaggerated accounts given by Dr. Hawkesworth of his Voyages. I told him that while I was with the Captain, I caught the enthusiasm of curiosity and adventure, and felt a strong inclination to go with him on his next voyage. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, a man *does* feel so, till he considers how very little he can learn from such voyages." BOSWELL. "But one is carried away with the general grand and indistinct notion of A Voyage round the World." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, but a man is to guard himself against taking a thing in general." I said I was certain that a great part of what we are told by the travellers to the South Sea, must be conjecture, because they had not enough of the language of those countries to understand so much as they have related. Objects falling under the observation of the senses might

be clearly known; but every thing intellectual, every thing abstract—politics, morals, and religion, must be darkly guessed. Dr. Johnson was of the same opinion. He upon another occasion, when a friend mentioned to him several extraordinary facts, as communicated to him by the circumnavigators, sily observed, “Sir, I never before knew how much I was respected by these gentlemen; they told *me* none of these things.”

He had been in company with Omai, a native of one of the South Sea Islands, after he had been some time in this country. He was struck with the elegance of his behaviour, and accounted for it thus: “Sir, he had passed his time, while in England, only in the best company; so that all that he had acquired of our manners was genteel. As a proof of this, sir, Lord Mulgrave and he dined one day at Streatham; they sat with their backs to the light fronting me, so that I could not see distinctly; and there was so little of the savage in Omai, that I was afraid to speak to either, lest I should mistake one for the other.”

We agreed to dine to-day at the Mitre Tavern, after the rising of the House of Lords, where a branch of the litigation concerning the Douglas Estate, in which I was one of the counsel, was to come on. I brought with me Mr. Murray, Solicitor General of Scotland, now one of the Judges of the Court of Session, with the title of Lord Henderland. I mentioned Mr. Solicitor's relation, Lord Charles Hay, with whom I knew Dr. Johnson had been acquainted. JOHNSON. “I wrote something for Lord Charles; and I thought he had nothing to fear from a court-martial. I suffered a great loss when he died; he was a mighty pleasing man in conversation, and a reading man. The character of a soldier is high. They who stand forth the foremost in dan-

ger, for the community, have the respect of mankind. An officer is much more respected than any other man who has as little money. In a commercial country, money will always purchase respect. But you find an officer, who has, properly speaking, no money, is every where well received and treated with attention. The character of a soldier always stands him in stead."

BOSWELL. "Yet, sir, I think that common soldiers are worse thought of than other men in the same rank of life; such as labourers." JOHNSON.

"Why, sir; a common soldier is usually a very gross man, and any quality which procures respect may be overwhelmed by grossness. A man of learning may be so vicious or so ridiculous that you cannot respect him. A common soldier, too, generally eats more than he can pay for. But when a common soldier is civil in his quarters, his red coat procures him a degree of respect." The peculiar respect paid to the military character in France was mentioned. BOSWELL. "I should think that where military men are so numerous, they would be less valued as not being rare." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, wherever a particular character or profession is high in the estimation of a people, those who are of it will be valued above other men. We value an Englishman high in this country, and yet Englishmen are not rare in it."

Mr. Murray praised the ancient philosophers for the candour and good humour with which those of different sects disputed with each other. JOHNSON. "Sir, they disputed with good humour, because they were not in earnest as to religion. Had the ancients been serious in their belief, we should not have had their Gods exhibited in the manner we find them represented in the Poets. The people would not have suffered it. They disputed with good humour upon the

sauciful theories, because they were not interested in the truth of them : when a man has nothing to lose, he may be in good humour with his opponent. Accordingly you see in Lucian, the Epicurean, who argues only negatively, keeps his temper ; the Stoick, who has something positive to preserve, grows angry. Being angry with one who controverts an opinion which you value is a necessary consequence of the uneasiness which you feel. Every man who attacks my belief diminishes in some degree my confidence in it, and therefore makes me uneasy ; and I am angry with him who makes me uneasy. Those only who believed in revelation have been angry at having their faith called in question ; because they only had something upon which they could rest as matter of fact." MURRAY. "It seems to me that we are not angry at a man for controverting an opinion which we believe and value ; we rather pity him." JOHNSON. "Why, sir ; to be sure when you wish a man to have that belief which you think is of infinite advantage, you wish well to him ; but your primary consideration is your own quiet. If a madman were to come into this room with a stick in his hand, no doubt we should pity the state of his mind ; but our primary consideration would be to take care of ourselves. We should knock him down first, and pity him afterwards. No, sir ; every man will dispute with great good humour upon a subject in which he is not interested. I will dispute very calmly upon the probability of another man's son being hanged ; but if a man zealously enforces the probability that my own son will be hanged, I shall certainly not be in a very good humour with him." I added this illustration : "If a man endeavours to convince me that my wife, whom I love very much, and in whom I place great confidence, is a disagreeable woman, and is even un-





in general they are held no longer than till an opportunity offers of getting away. Now and then, perhaps, there is a fellow who grows old in his college; but this is against his will, unless he be a man very indolent indeed. A hundred a year is reckoned a good fellowship, and that is no more than is necessary to keep a man decently as a scholar. We do not allow our fellows to marry, because we consider academical institutions as preparatory to a settlement in the world. It is only by being employed as a tutor that a fellow can obtain any thing more than a livelihood: To be sure a man who has enough without teaching will probably not teach; for we would all be idle if we could. In the same manner, a man who is to get nothing by teaching will not exert himself. Gresham College was intended as a place of instruction for London; able professors were to read lectures gratis, they contrived to have no scholars; whereas, if they had been allowed to receive but sixpence a lecture from each scholar, they would have been emulous to have had many scholars. Every body will agree that it should be the interest of those who teach to have scholars; and this is the case in our Universities. That they are too rich is certainly not true; for they have nothing good enough to keep a man of eminent learning with them for his life. In the foreign Universities a professorship is a high thing. It is as much almost as a man can make by his learning; and therefore we find the most learned men abroad are in the Universities. It is not so with us. Our Universities are impoverished of learning by the penury of their provisions. I wish there were many places of a thousand a year at Oxford, to keep first rate men of learning from quitting the University." Undoubtedly if this were the case, Literature would have a

still greater dignity and splendour at Oxford, and there would be grander living sources of instruction.

I mentioned Mr. Maclaurin's uneasiness on account of a degree of ridicule carelessly thrown on his deceased father, in Goldsmith's "History of Animated Nature," in which that celebrated mathematician is represented as being subject to fits of yawning so violent as to render him incapable of proceeding in his lecture; a story altogether unfounded, but for the publication of which the law would give no reparation<sup>3</sup>. This led us to agitate the question, whether legal redress could be obtained, even when a man's deceased relation was calumniated in a publication. Mr. Murray maintained there should be reparation, unless the authour could justify himself by proving the fact. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is of so much more consequence that truth should be told, than that individuals should not be made uneasy, that it is much better that the law does not restrain writing freely concerning the characters of the dead. Damages will be given to a man who is calumniated in his lifetime, because he may be hurt in his worldly interest, or at least hurt in his mind: but the law does not regard that uneasiness which a man feels on having his ancestor calumniated. That is too nice. Let him deny what is said, and let the matter have a fair chance by discussion. But if a man could say nothing against a character but what he can prove, history could not be written; for a great deal is known of men of which proof cannot be brought.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Goldsmith was dead before Mr. Maclaurin discovered the ludicrous error. But Mr. Nourse, the bookseller, who was the proprietor of the work, upon being applied to by Sir John Pringle, agreed very handsomely to have the leaf on which it was contained canceled, and reprinted without it at his own expense.

A minister may be notoriously known to take bribes, and yet you may not be able to prove it." Mr. Murray suggested, that the authour should be obliged to show some sort of evidence, though he would not require a strict legal proof: but Johnson firmly and resolutely opposed any restraint whatever, as adverse to a free investigation of the characters of mankind<sup>o</sup>.

On Thursday, April 4, having called on Dr. Johnson, I said, it was a pity that truth was not so firm as to bid defiance to all attacks, so that it might be shot at as much as people chose to attempt, and yet remain unhurt. JOHNSON. "Then, sir, it would not be shot at. Nobody attempts to dispute that two and two make four: but with contests concerning moral truth human passions are generally mixed, and therefore it must ever be liable to assault and misrepresentation."

<sup>o</sup> What Dr. Johnson has here said, is undoubtedly good sense: yet I am afraid that law, though defined by *Lord Coke* "the perfection of reason," is not altogether *with him*; for it is held in the books, that an attack on the reputation even of a dead man may be punished as a libel, because tending to a breach of the peace. There is, however, I believe, no modern decided case to that effect. In the King's Bench, Trinity Term, 1790, the question occurred on occasion of an indictment, *The King, v. Topham*, who, as a proprietor of a newspaper entitled "The World," was found guilty of a libel against Earl Cowper, deceased, because certain injurious charges against his Lordship were published in that paper. An arrest of judgment having been moved for, the case was afterwards solemnly argued. My friend Mr. Const, whom I delight in having an opportunity to praise, not only for his abilities but his manners; a gentleman whose ancient German blood has been mellowed in England, and who may be truly said to unite the *Baron* and the *Barrister*, was one of the Counsel for Mr. Topham. He displayed much learning and ingenuity upon the general question; which, however, was not decided, as the Court granted an arrest chiefly on the informality of the indictment. No man has a higher reverence for the law of England than I have; but, with all deference, I cannot help thinking that prosecution by indictment, if a defendant is never to be allowed to justify, must often be very oppressive, unless Jurors, whom I am more and more confirmed in holding to be judges of law as well as of fact, resolutely interpose. Of late an act of Parliament has passed declaratory of their full right to one as well as the other, in matter of libel; and the bill having been brought in by a popular gentleman,

On Friday, April 5, being Good Friday, after having attended the morning service at St. Clement's church, I walked home with Johnson. We talked of the Roman Catholick religion. JOHNSON. "In the barbarous ages, sir, priests and people were equally deceived; but afterwards there were gross corruptions introduced by the clergy, such as indulgences to priests to have concubines, and the worship of images, not, indeed, inculcated, but knowingly permitted." He strongly censured the licensed stews at Rome. BOSWELL. "So then, sir, you would allow of no irregular intercourse whatever between the sexes?" JOHNSON. "To be sure I would not, sir. I would punish it much more than it is done, and so restrain it. In all countries there has been fornication, as in all countries there has been theft; but there may be more or less of the one, as well as of the other, in proportion to the force of law.

many of his party have in most extravagant terms declaimed on the wonderful acquisition to the liberty of the press. For my own part I ever was clearly of opinion that this right was inherent in the very constitution of a Jury, and indeed in sense and reason inseparable from their important function. To establish it, therefore, by statute is, I think, narrowing its foundation, which is the broad and deep basis of Common Law. Would it not rather weaken the right of primogeniture, or any other old and universally acknowledged right, should the legislature pass an act in favour of it? In my "Letter to the People of Scotland, against diminishing the number of the Lords of Session," published in 1786, there is the following passage, which, as a concise, and I hope a fair and rational state of the matter, I presume to quote: "The Juries of England are Judges of *law* as well as of *fact* in many civil, and in all criminal trials. That my principles of *resistance* may not be misapprehended any more than my principles of *submission*, I protest that I should be the last man in the world to encourage Juries to contradict rashly, wantonly, or perversely, the opinion of the Judges. On the contrary, I would have them listen respectfully to the advice they receive from the Bench, by which they may often be well directed in forming *their own opinion*; which, 'and not another's,' is the opinion they are to return upon *their oaths*. But where, after due attention to all that the Judge has said, they are decidedly of a different opinion from him, they have not only a *power* and a *right*, but they are *bound in conscience* to bring in a verdict accordingly."

All men will naturally commit fornication, as all men will naturally steal. And, sir, it is very absurd to argue, as has been often done, that prostitutes are necessary to prevent the violent effects of appetite from violating the decent order of life; nay, should be permitted, in order to preserve the chastity of our wives and daughters. Depend upon it, sir, severe laws, steadily enforced, would be sufficient against those evils, and would promote marriage."

I stated to him this case:—"Suppose a man has a daughter, who he knows has been seduced, but her misfortune is concealed from the world; should he keep her in his house? Would he not, by doing so, be accessory to imposition? And, perhaps, a worthy, unsuspecting man might come and marry this woman, unless the father inform him of the truth." JOHNSON. "Sir, he is accessory to no imposition. His daughter is in his house; and if a man courts her, he takes his chance. If a friend, or, indeed, if any man asks his opinion whether he should marry her, he ought to advise him against it, without telling why, because his real opinion is then required. Or, if he has other daughters who know of her frailty, he ought not to keep her in his house. You are to consider the state of life is this; we are to judge of one another's characters as well as we can; and a man is not bound, in honesty or honour; to tell us the faults of his daughter or of himself. A man who has debauched his friend's daughter is not obliged to say to every body—"Take care of me; don't let me into your house without suspicion. I once debauched a friend's daughter. I may debauch yours."

Mr. Thrale called upon him, and appeared to bear the loss of his son with a manly composure. There was no affectation about him; and he talked, as usual, upon indifferent subjects. He

seemed to me to hesitate as to the intended Italian tour, on which, I flattered myself, he and Mrs. Thrale, and Dr. Johnson were soon to set out; and, therefore, I pressed it as much as I could. I mentioned that Mr. Beauclerk had said, that Baretti, whom they were to carry with them, would keep them so long in the little towns of his own district, that they would not have time to see Rome. I mentioned this to put them on their guard. JOHNSON. "Sir, we do not thank Mr. Beauclerk for supposing that we are to be directed by Baretti. No, sir; Mr. Thrale is to go by my advice to Mr. Jackson<sup>7</sup> (the all knowing), and get from him a plan for seeing the most that can be seen in the time that we have to travel. We must, to be sure, see Rome, Naples, Florence, and Venice, and as much more as we can." (Speaking with a tone of animation.)

When I expressed an earnest wish for his remarks on Italy, he said, "I do not see that I could make a book upon Italy; yet I should be glad to get two hundred pounds or five hundred pounds by such a work." This showed both that a journal of his Tour upon the Continent was not wholly out of his contemplation, and that he uniformly adhered to that strange opinion which his indolent disposition made him utter: "No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money." Numerous instances to refute this will occur to all who are versed in the history of literature.

He gave us one of the many sketches of character which were treasured in his mind, and which he was wont to produce quite unexpectedly in a very entertaining manner. "I lately

<sup>7</sup> A gentleman who, from his extraordinary stores of knowledge, has been styled *omniscient*. Johnson, I think very properly, altered it to all knowing, as it is a *verbum solenne*, appropriated to the Supreme Being.

(said he) received a letter from the East Indies, from a gentleman whom I formerly knew very well; he had returned from that country with a handsome fortune, as it was reckoned, before means were found to acquire those immense sums which have been brought from thence of late; he was a scholar and an agreeable man, and lived very prettily in London till his wife died. After her death he took to dissipation and gaming, and lost all he had. One evening he lost a thousand pounds to a gentleman whose name I am sorry I have forgotten. Next morning he sent the gentleman five hundred pounds, with an apology that it was all he had in the world. The gentleman sent the money back to him, declaring he would not accept of it; and adding, that if Mr. ——— had occasion for five hundred pounds more, he would lend it to him. He resolved to go out again to the East Indies, and make his fortune anew. He got a considerable appointment, and I had some intention of accompanying him. Had I thought then as I do now, I should have gone: but at that time I had objections to quitting England."

It was a very remarkable circumstance about Johnson, whom shallow observers have supposed to have been ignorant of the world, that very few men had seen greater variety of characters; and none could observe them better, as was evident from the strong, yet nice portraits which he often drew. I have frequently thought that if he had made out what the French call *un catalogue raisonné* of all the people who had passed under his observation, it would have afforded a very rich fund of instruction and entertainment. The suddenness with which his accounts of some of them started out in conversation was not less pleasing than surprising. I remember he once



observed to me, "It is wonderful, sir, what is to be found in London. The most literary conversation that I ever enjoyed was at the table of Jack Ellis, a money scrivener, behind the Royal Exchange, with whom I at one period used to dine generally once a week\*."

Volumes would be required to contain a list of his numerous and various acquaintance, none of whom he ever forgot; and could describe and discriminate them all with precision and vivacity. He associated with persons the most widely different in manners, abilities, rank, and accomplishments. He was at once the companion of the brilliant Colonel Forrester, of the guards, who wrote "The Polite Philosopher," and of the awkward and uncouth Robert Levett; of Lord Thurlow, and Mr. Sastres, the Italian master; and has dined one day with the beautiful, gay, and fascinating Lady Craven<sup>9</sup> and the next with good Mrs. Gardiner, the tallow chandler, on Snow Hill.

\* This Mr. Ellis was, I believe, the last of that profession called *Scriveners*, which is one of the London companies, but of which the business is no longer carried on separately, but is transacted by attorneys and others. He was a man of literature and talents. He was the authour of a Hudibrastick version of Maphæus's Canto, in addition to the *Æneid*; of some poems in Dodsley's collections; and various other small pieces; but being a very modest man, never put his name to any thing. He showed me a translation which he had made of Ovid's *Epistles*, very prettily done. There is a good engraved portrait of him by Pether, from a picture by Fry, which hangs in the hall of the Scriveners' Company. I visited him October 4, 1790, in his ninety-third year, and found his judgment distinct and clear, and his memory, though faded so as to fail him occasionally, yet, as he assured me, and I indeed perceived, able to serve him very well, after a little recollection. It was agreeable to observe, that he was free from the discontent and fretfulness which too often molest old age. He in the summer of that year walked to Rotherhithe, where he dined, and walked home in the evening. He died on the 31st of December, 1791.

<sup>9</sup> Lord Macartney, who, with his other distinguished qualities, is remarkable also for an elegant pleasantry, told me that he met Johnson at Lady Craven's, and that he seemed jealous of any interference: "So (said his Lordship, smiling), *I kept back.*"

On my expressing my wonder at his discovering so much of the knowledge peculiar to different professions, he told me, "I learned what I know of law chiefly from Mr. Ballow<sup>1</sup>, a very able man. I learned some too from Chambers; but was not so teachable then. One is not willing to be taught by a young man." When I expressed a wish to know more about Mr. Ballow, Johnson said, "Sir, I have seen him but once these twenty years. The tide of life has driven us different ways." I was sorry at the time to hear this; but whoever quits the creeks of private connexions, and fairly gets into the great ocean of London, will, by imperceptible degrees, unavoidably experience such cessations of acquaintance.

"My knowledge of physick (he added) I learned from Dr. James, whom I helped in writing the proposals for his Dictionary, and also a little in the Dictionary itself<sup>2</sup>. I also learned from Dr. Lawrence, but was then grown more stubborn."

A curious incident happened to-day while Mr. Thrale and I sat with him. Francis announced that a large packet was brought to him from the post office, said to have come from Lisbon, and it was charged *seven pounds ten shillings*. He would not receive it, supposing it to be some trick, nor did he even look at it. But upon in-

<sup>1</sup> There is an account of him in Sir John Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 244.

[Mr. Thomas Ballow was authour of an excellent Treatise of Equity, printed anonymously in 1742, and lately republished with very valuable additions, by John Fonblanque, Esq.]

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Ballow died suddenly in London, July 26, 1782, aged seventy-five, and is mentioned in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for that year as "a great Greek Scholar, and famous for his knowledge of the old philosophy." M.]

<sup>3</sup> I have in vain endeavoured to find out what parts Johnson wrote for Dr. James. Perhaps medical men may.

quiry afterwards he found that it was a real packet for him, from that very friend in the East Indies of whom he had been speaking; and the ship which carried it having come to Portugal, this packet, with others, had been put into the post office at Lisbon.

I mentioned a new gaming club, of which Mr. Beauclerk had given me an account, where the members played to a desperate extent. JOHNSON. "Depend upon it, sir, this is mere talk. *Who* is ruined by gaming? You will not find six instances in an age. There is a strange rout made about deep play: whereas you have many more people ruined by adventurous trade, and yet we do not hear such an outcry against it."

THRALE. "There may be few people absolutely ruined by deep play; but very many are much hurt in their circumstances by it." JOHNSON.

"Yes, sir, and so are very many by other kinds of expense." I had heard him talk once before in the same manner; and at Oxford he said, "he wished he had learned to play at cards." The truth, however, is, that he loved to display his ingenuity in argument; and therefore would sometimes in conversation maintain opinions which he was sensible were wrong, but in supporting which, his reasoning and wit would be most conspicuous. He would begin thus: "Why, sir, as to the good or evil of card playing—" "Now (said Garrick) he is thinking which side he shall take." He appeared to have a pleasure in contradiction, especially when any opinion whatever was delivered with an air of confidence; so that there was hardly any topick, if not one of the great truths of religion and morality, that he might not have been incited to argue either for or against. Lord Elibank<sup>2</sup> had the highest admiration of his powers.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick, Lord Elibank, who died in 1778.

He once observed to me, "Whatever opinion Johnson maintains, I will not say that he convinces me; but he never fails to show me that he has good reasons for it." I have heard Johnson pay his lordship this high compliment:

"I never was in Lord Elibank's company without learning something."

We sat together till it was too late for the afternoon service. Thrale said, he had come with intention to go to church with us. We went at seven to evening prayers at St. Clement's Church, after having drunk coffee; an indulgence which, I understood, Johnson yielded to on this occasion in compliment to Thrale.

On Sunday, April 7, Easter Day, after having been at St. Paul's cathedral, I came to Dr. Johnson, according to my usual custom. It seemed to me, that there was always something peculiarly mild and placid in his manner upon this holy festival, the commemoration of the most joyful event in the history of our world, the resurrection of our LORD and SAVIOUR, who, having triumphed over death and the grave, proclaimed immortality to mankind.

I repeated to him an argument of a lady of my acquaintance, who maintained that her husband's having been guilty of numberless infidelities released her from conjugal obligations, because they were reciprocal. JOHNSON. "This is miserable stuff, sir. To the contract of marriage, besides the man and wife, there is a third party—Society; and if it be considered as a vow—God: and, therefore, it cannot be dissolved by their consent alone. Laws are not made for particular cases, but for men in general. A woman may be unhappy with her husband; but she cannot be freed from him without the approbation of the civil and ecclesiastical power. A man may be un-

happy because he is not so rich as another; but he is not to seize upon another's property with his own hand." BOSWELL. "But, sir, this lady does not want that the contract should be dissolved; she only argues that she may indulge herself in gallantries with equal freedom as her husband does, provided she takes care not to introduce a spurious issue into his family. You know, sir, what Macrobius has told of Julia<sup>4</sup>." JOHNSON. "This lady of yours, sir, I think, is very fit for a brothel."

Mr. Macbean, authour of the "Dictionary of Ancient Geography" came in. He mentioned that he had been forty years absent from Scotland. "Ah, Boswell! (said Johnson, smiling), what would you give to be forty years from Scotland?" I said, "I should not like to be so long absent from the seat of my ancestors." This gentleman, Mrs. Williams, and Mr. Levett dined with us.

Dr. Johnson made a remark, which both Mr. Macbean and I thought new. It was this: that "the law against usury is for the protection of creditors as well as debtors; for if there were no such check, people would be apt, from the temptation of great interest, to lend to desperate persons, by whom they would lose their money. Accordingly there are instances of ladies being ruined, by having injudiciously sunk their fortunes for high annuities, which, after a few years, ceased to be paid, in consequence of the ruined circumstances of the borrower."

Mrs. Williams was very peevish; and I wondered at Johnson's patience with her now, as I had often done on similar occasions. The truth is, that his humane consideration of the forlorn

<sup>4</sup> "*Nunquam enim nisi navi plena tollo vectorem.*" Lib. ii. c. vi.

and indigent state in which this lady was left by her father induced him to treat her with the utmost tenderness, and even to be desirous of procuring her amusement, so as sometimes to incommode many of his friends by carrying her with him to their houses, where, from her manner of eating, in consequence of her blindness, she could not but offend the delicacy of persons of nice sensations.

After coffee, we went to afternoon service in St. Clement's church. Observing some beggars in the street as we walked along, I said to him I supposed there was no civilized country in the world where the misery of want in the lowest classes of the people was prevented. JOHNSON. "I believe, sir, there is not; but it is better that some should be unhappy than that none should be happy, which would be the case in a general state of equality."

When the service was ended, I went home with him, and we sat quietly by ourselves. He recommended Dr. Cheyne's books. I said, I thought Cheyne had been reckoned whimsical.—"So he was (said he), in some things; but there is no end of objections. There are few books to which some objection or other may not be made." He added, "I would not have you read any thing else of Cheyne, but his book on Health, and his 'English Malady.'"

Upon the question whether a man who had been guilty of vicious actions would do well to force himself into solitude and sadness? JOHNSON. "No, sir, unless it prevent him from being vicious again. With some people gloomy penitence is only madness turned upside down. A man may be gloomy till, in order to be relieved from gloom, he has recourse again to criminal indulgencies."

On Wednesday, April 10, I dined with him at Mr. Thrale's, where were Mr. Murphy and some other company. Before dinner, Dr. Johnson and I passed some time by ourselves. I was sorry to find it was now resolved that the proposed journey to Italy should not take place this year. He said, "I am disappointed to be sure; but it is not a great disappointment." I wondered to see him bear, with a philosophical calmness, what would have made most people peevish and fretful. I perceived, however, that he had so warmly cherished the hope of enjoying classical scenes that he could not easily part with the scheme; for he said, "I shall probably contrive to get to Italy some other way. But I won't mention it to Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, as it might vex them." I suggested that going to Italy might have done Mr. and Mrs. Thrale good. JOHNSON. "I rather believe not, sir. While grief is fresh, every attempt to divert only irritates. You must wait till grief be *digested*, and then amusement will dissipate the remains of it."

At dinner, Mr. Murphy entertained us with the history of Mr. Joseph Simpson, a schoolfellow of Dr. Johnson's, a barrister at law, of good parts, but who fell into a dissipated course of life, incompatible with that success in his profession which he once had, and would otherwise have deservedly maintained; yet he still preserved a dignity in his deportment. He wrote a tragedy on the story of Leonidas, entitled "The Patriot." He read it to a company of lawyers, who found so many faults that he wrote it over again: so then there were two tragedies on the same subject and with the same title. Dr. Johnson told us that one of them was still in his possession. This very piece was, after his death, published by some person who had been about him; and, for

the sake of a little hasty profit, was fallaciously advertised, so as to make it be believed to have been written by Johnson himself.

I said, I disliked the custom which some people had of bringing their children into company, because it in a manner forced us to pay foolish compliments to please their parents. JOHNSON. "You are right, sir. We may be excused for not caring much about other people's children, for there are many who care very little about their own children. It may be observed that men, who from being engaged in business, or from their course of life in whatever way, seldom see their children, do not care much about them. I myself should not have had much fondness for a child of my own." MRS. THRALE. "Nay, sir, how can you talk so?" JOHNSON. "At least, I never wished to have a child."

Mr. Murphy mentioned Dr. Johnson's having a design to publish an edition of Cowley. Johnson said, he did not know but he should; and he expressed his disapprobation of Dr. Hurd for having published a mutilated edition under the title of "Select Works of Abraham Cowley." Mr. Murphy thought it a bad precedent; observing, that any authour might be used in the same manner; and that it was pleasing to see the variety of an authour's compositions at different periods.

We talked of Flatman's Poems; and Mrs. Thrale observed that Pope had partly borrowed from him, "The dying Christian to his Soul." Johnson repeated Rochester's verses upon Flatman, which I think by much too severe:

"Nor that slow drudge in swift Pindarick strains,  
Flatman, who Cowley imitates with pains,  
And rides a jaded Muse, whipt with loose reins."

I like to recollect all the passages that I heard Johnson repeat: it stamps a value on them.



He told us that the book entitled "The Lives of the Poets, by Mr. Cibber," was entirely compiled by Mr. Shiels<sup>5</sup>, a Scotchman, one of his amanuenses. "The booksellers (said he) gave Theophilus Cibber, who was then in prison, ten guineas, to allow *Mr. Cibber* to be put upon the title-page, as the authour; by this, a double imposition was intended: in the first place, that it was the work of a Cibber at all; and, in the second place, that it was the work of old Cibber."

Mr. Murphy said, that "The Memoirs of Gray's Life set him much higher in his estimation than his poems did; for you there saw a man con-

<sup>5</sup> In the Monthly Review for May, 1792, there is such a correction of the above passage as I should think myself very culpable not to subjoin: "This account is very inaccurate. The following statement of facts we know to be true in every material circumstance:—Shiels was the principal collector and digester of the materials for the work: but as he was very raw in authorship, an indifferent writer in prose, and his language full of Scotticisms, Cibber, who was a clever, lively fellow, and then soliciting employment among the booksellers, was engaged to correct the style and diction of the whole work, then intended to make only four volumes, with power to alter, expunge, or add, as he liked. He was also to supply notes, occasionally, especially concerning those dramatic poets with whom he had been chiefly conversant. He also engaged to write several of the Lives; which (as we are told) he accordingly performed. He was farther useful in striking out the Jacobitical and Tory sentiments which Shiels had industriously interspersed wherever he could bring them in:—and as the success of the work appeared, after all, very doubtful, he was content with twenty-one pounds for his labour, besides a few sets of the books to disperse among his friends.—Shiels had nearly seventy pounds, beside the advantage of many of the best Lives in the work being communicated by friends to the undertaking; and for which Mr. Shiels had the same consideration as for the rest, being paid by the sheet, for the whole. He was, however, so angry with his Whiggish supervisor (THE like his father, being a violent stickler for the political principles which prevailed in the reign of George the Second), for so unmercifully mutilating his copy, and scounting his politicks, that he wrote Cibber a challenge: but was prevented from sending it by the publisher, who fairly laughed him out of his fury. The proprietors, too, were discontented in the end, on account of Mr. Cibber's unexpected industry; for his corrections and alterations in the proof sheets were so numerous and considerable that the printer made for them a grievous addition to his bill; and, in fine, all parties were dissatisfied. On the whole, the work was productive of no profit to the undertakers, who had agreed, in case of success, to make Cibber a present of some addition to the

stantly at work in literature." Johnson acquiesced in this; but depreciated the book, I thought, very unreasonably. For he said, "I forced myself to read it only because it was a common topick of conversation. I found it mighty dull; and, as to the style, it is fit for the second table." Why he thought so I was at a loss to conceive. He now gave it as his opinion, that "Akenside was a superiour poet both to Gray and Mason."

Talking of the Reviews, Johnson said, "I think them very impartial: I do not know an instance of partiality." He mentioned what had passed

twenty guineas which he had received, and for which his receipt is now in the booksellers' hands. We are farther assured that he actually obtained an additional sum; when he, soon after (in the year 1758), unfortunately embarked for Dublin, on an engagement for one of the theatres there: but the ship was cast away, and every person on board perished. There were about sixty passengers, among whom was the Earl of Drogheda, with many other persons of consequence and property.

"As to the alleged design of making the compliment pass for the work of old Mr. Cibber, the charges seem to have been founded on a somewhat uncharitable construction. We are assured that the thought was not harboured by some of the proprietors, who are still living; and we hope that it did not occur to the first designer of the work, who was also the printer of it, and who bore a respectable character.

"We have been induced to enter thus circumstantially into the foregoing detail of facts relating to the *Lives of the Poets*, compiled by Messrs. Cibber and Shiels, from a sincere regard to that sacred principle of Truth, to which Dr. Johnson so rigidly adhered, according to the best of his knowledge; and which, we believe, *no consideration* would have prevailed on him to violate. In regard to the matter which we now dismiss, he had, no doubt, been misled by partial and wrong information: Shiels was the Doctor's amanuensis: he had quarreled with Cibber; it is natural to suppose that he told his story in his own way; and it is certain that he was not 'a very sturdy moralist.'" This explanation appears to me very satisfactory. It is, however, to be observed that the story told by Johnson does not rest solely upon my record of his conversation; for he himself has published it in his life of Hammond, where he says, "the manuscript of Shiels is now in my possession." Very probably he had trusted to Shiels's word, and never looked at it so as to compare it with "The *Lives of the Poets*," as published under Mr. Cibber's name. What became of that manuscript I know not. I should have liked much to examine it. I suppose it was thrown into the fire in that impetuous combustion of papers, which Johnson I think rashly executed when moribundus.

upon the subject of the Monthly and Critical Reviews, in the conversation with which his Majesty had honoured him. He expatiated a little more on them this evening. "The Monthly Reviewers (said he) are not Deists; but they are Christians with as little Christianity as may be; and are for pulling down all establishments. The Critical Reviewers are for supporting the constitution both in church and state". The Critical Reviewers, I believe, often review without reading the books through: but lay hold of a topick, and write chiefly from their own minds. The Monthly Reviewers are duller men, and are glad to read the books through."

He talked of Lord Lyttelton's extreme anxiety as an authour; observing, that "he was thirty years in preparing his History, and that he employed a man to point it for him; as if (laughing) another man could point his sense better than himself." Mr. Murphy said, he understood his history was kept back several years for fear of Smollett. JOHNSON. "This seems strange to Murphy and me, who never felt that anxiety, but sent what we wrote to the press, and let it take its chance." MRS. THRALE. "The time has been, sir, when you felt it." JOHNSON. "Why really, madam, I do not recollect a time when that was the case."

Talking of "The Spectator," he said, "It is wonderful that there is such a proportion of bad papers in the half of the work which was not written by Addison; for there was all the world to write that half, yet not a half of that half is good. One of the finest pieces in the English language is the paper on Novelty, yet we do not hear it talked of. It was written by Grove, a

\* [Johnson's opinions concerning the Monthly and Critical Reviews would not be accurate now [1803.] B.]

dissenting *teacher*." He would not, I perceived, call him a *clergyman*, though he was candid enough to allow very great merit to his composition. Mr. Murphy said, he remembered when there were several people alive in London, who enjoyed a considerable reputation merely from having written a paper in "The Spectator." He mentioned particularly Mr. Ince, who used to frequent Tom's Coffee-house. "But (said Johnson) you must consider how highly Steele speaks of Mr. Ince." He would not allow that the paper on carrying a boy to travel, signed *Philip Homebred*, which was reported to be written by the Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, had merit. He said, "it was quite vulgar, and had nothing luminous."

Johnson mentioned Dr. Barry's System of Physick. "He was a man (said he) who had acquired a high reputation in Dublin, came over to England, and brought his reputation with him, but had not great success. His notion was, that pulsation occasions death by attrition; and that, therefore, the way to preserve life is to retard pulsation. But we know that pulsation is strongest in infants, and that we increase in growth while it operates in its regular course; so it cannot be the cause of destruction." Soon after this, he said something very flattering to Mrs. Thrale, which I do not recollect; but it concluded with wishing her long life. "Sir (said I), if Dr. Barry's system be true, you have now shortened Mrs. Thrale's life, perhaps, some minutes, by accelerating her pulsation."

On Thursday, April 11, I dined with him at General Paoli's, in whose house I now resided; and where I had ever afterwards the honour of being entertained with the kindest attention as

1 Sir Edward Barry, Baronet.

his constant guest, while I was in London, till I had a house of my own there. I mentioned my having that morning introduced to Mr. Garrick Count Neni, a Flemish nobleman of great rank and fortune, to whom Garrick talked of Abel Drugger as a *small part*; and related, with pleasant vanity, that a Frenchman who had seen him in one of his low characters, exclaimed, "*Comment! je ne le crois pas. Ce n'est pas Monsieur Garrick, ce grand homma!*" Garrick added, with an appearance of grave recollection, "If I were to begin life again, I think I should not play those low characters." Upon which I observed, "Sir, you would be in the wrong; for your great excellence is your variety of playing, your representing so well characters so very different." JOHNSON. "Garrick, sir, was not in earnest in what he said; for, to be sure, his peculiar excellence is his variety; and, perhaps, there is not any one character which has not been as well acted by somebody else as he could do it." BOSWELL. "Why then, sir, did he talk so?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, to make you answer as you did." BOSWELL. "I don't know, sir; he seemed to dip deep into his mind for the reflection." JOHNSON. "He had not far to dip, sir: he had said the same thing, probably, twenty times before."

Of a nobleman raised at a very early period to high office, he said, "His parts, sir, are pretty well for a Lord; but would not be distinguished in a man who had nothing else but his parts."

A journey to Italy was still in his thoughts. He said, "A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of traveling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean. On those shores were the four great Empires of the world; the

Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman.—All our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above savages has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean.” The General observed that “THE MEDITERRANEAN would be a noble subject for a poem.”

We talked of translation. I said, I could not define it, nor could I think of a similitude to illustrate it; but that it appeared to me the translation of poetry could be only imitation. JOHNSON. “You may translate books of science exactly. You may also translate history, in so far as it is not embellished with oratory, which is poetical. Poetry, indeed, cannot be translated; and, therefore, it is the poets that preserve languages; for we would not be at the trouble to learn a language if we could have all that is written in it just as well in a translation. But as the beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written, we learn the language.”

A gentleman maintained that the art of printing had hurt real learning by disseminating idle writings.—JOHNSON. “Sir, if it had not been for the art of printing, we should now have no learning at all; for books would have perished faster than they could have been transcribed.” This observation seems not just, considering for how many ages books were preserved by writing alone\*.

The same gentleman maintained that a general diffusion of knowledge among a people was a disadvantage; for it made the vulgar rise above

\* [The authour did not recollect that of the books preserved (and an infinite number was lost) all were confined to two languages. In modern times and modern languages, France and Italy alone produce more books in a given time than Greece and Rome; put England, Spain, Germany, and the Northern kingdoms out of the question. B.]

their humble sphere. JOHNSON: "Sir, while knowledge is a distinction, those who are possessed of it will naturally rise above those who are not. Merely to read and write was a distinction at first; but we see when reading and writing have become general, the common people keep their stations. And so, were higher attainments to become general, the effect would be the same."

"Goldsmith (he said) referred every thing to vanity; his virtues and his vices too were from that motive. He was not a social man. He never exchanged mind with you."

We spent the evening at Mr. Hoole's. Mr. Mickle, the excellent translator of "The Lusiad," was there. I have preserved little of the conversation of this evening. Dr. Johnson said, "Thomson had a true poetical genius, the power of viewing every thing in a poetical light. His fault is such a cloud of words sometimes, that the sense can hardly peep through. Shiels, who compiled 'Cibber's Lives of the Poets,' was one day sitting with me. I took down Thomson, and read aloud a large portion of him, and then asked, —Is not this fine? Shiels having expressed the highest admiration, Well, sir (said I), I have omitted every other line."

I related a dispute between Goldsmith and Mr. Robert Dodsley, one day when they and I were dining at Tom Davies's, in 1762. Goldsmith asserted that there was no poetry produced in this age. Dodsley appealed to his own Collection, and maintained that though you could not find a palace like Dryden's "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," you had villages composed of very pretty houses; and he mentioned particularly "The Spleen." JOHNSON. "I think Dodsley gave up the question. He and Goldsmith said the same

thing; only he said it in a softer manner, than Goldsmith did; for he acknowledged that there was no poetry, nothing that towered above the common mark. You may find wit and humour in verse, and yet no poetry. ‘Hudibras’ has a profusion of these; yet it is not to be reckoned a poem. ‘The Spleen,’ in Dodsley’s collection, on which you say he chiefly rested, is not poetry.”

BOSWELL: “Does not Gray’s poetry, sir, tower above the common mark?” JOHNSON. “Yes, sir; but we must attend to the difference between what men in general cannot do if they would, and what every man may do if he would. Sixteen-string Jack<sup>1</sup> towered above the common mark.”

BOSWELL. “Then, sir, what is poetry?” JOHNSON. “Why, sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all *know* what light is; but it is not easy to *tell* what it is.”

On Friday, April 12, I dined with him at our friend Tom Davies’s, where we met Mr. Cradock, of Leicestershire, author of “Zobeide,” a tragedy; a very pleasing gentleman; to whom my friend Dr. Farmer’s very excellent Essay on the Learning of Shakspeare is addressed; and Dr. Harwood, who has written and published various works; particularly a fantastical translation of the New Testament in modern phrase, and with a Socinian twist.

I introduced Aristotle’s doctrine in his “Art of Poetry,” of “the *καθαρσις των παθηματων*, the purging of the passions,” as the purpose of tragedy.” “But how are the passions to be purged by terror and pity?” (said I, with an assumed air of

<sup>1</sup> A noted highwayman, who after having been several times tried and acquitted, was at last hanged. He was remarkable for foppery in his dress, and particularly for wearing a bunch of sixteen strings at the knees of his breeches.

<sup>2</sup> See an ingenious Essay on this subject by the late Dr. Moor, Greek professor at Glasgow.



ignorance, to incite him to talk, for which it was often necessary to employ some address). JOHNSON. "Why, sir, you are to consider what is the meaning of purging in the original sense. It is to expel impurities from the human body. The mind is subject to the same imperfection. The passions are the great movers of human actions; but they are mixed with such impurities that it is necessary they should be purged or refined by means of terror and pity. For instance, ambition is a noble passion; but by seeing upon the stage that a man who is so excessively ambitious as to raise himself by injustice is punished, we are terrified at the fatal consequences of such a passion. In the same manner a certain degree of resentment is necessary; but if we see that a man carries it too far, we pity the object of it, and are taught to moderate that passion." My record upon this occasion does great injustice to Johnson's expression, which was so forcible and brilliant that Mr. Cradock whispered me, "O that his words were written in a book!"

I observed, the great defect of the tragedy of "Othello" was, that it had not a moral; for that no man could resist the circumstances of suspicion which were artfully suggested to Othello's mind. JOHNSON. "In the first place, sir, we learn from Othello this very useful moral, not to make an unequal match; in the second place, we learn not to yield too readily to suspicion. The handkerchief is merely a trick, though a very pretty trick; but there are no other circumstances of reasonable suspicion, except what is related by Iago of Cassio's warm expressions concerning Desdemona in his sleep; and that depended entirely upon the assertion of one man. No, sir, I think Othello has more moral than almost any play."

Talking of a penurious gentleman of our acquaintance, Johnson said; "Sir, he is narrow, not so much from avarice as from impotence to spend his money. He cannot find in his heart to pour out a bottle of wine; but he would not much care if it should sour."

He said, he wished to see "John Dennis's Critical Works" collected. Davies said they would not sell. Dr. Johnson seemed to think otherwise.

Davies said of a well known dramatick author, that "he lived upon *potted stories*, and that he made his way as Hannibal did, by vinegar; having begun by attacking people, particularly the players."

He reminded Dr. Johnson of Mr. Murphy's having paid him the highest compliment that ever was paid to a layman, by asking his pardon for repeating some oaths in the course of telling a story.

Johnson and I supped this evening at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, in company with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Langton, Mr. Nairne, now one of the Scotch Judges, with the title of Lord Dunsinan, and my very worthy friend, Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo.

We discussed the question whether drinking improved conversation and benevolence. Sir Joshua maintained it did. JOHNSON. "No, sir: before dinner men meet with great inequality of understanding; and those who are conscious of their inferiority have the modesty not to talk. When they have drunk wine, every man feels himself happy, and loses that modesty, and grows impudent and vociferous: but he is not improved: he is only not sensible of his defects." Sir Joshua said, the Doctor was talking of the effects of excess in wine; but that a moderate glass enlivened the mind by giving a proper circulation to the blood. "I am (said he) in very good spi-

rits when I get up in the morning. By dinner-time I am exhausted; wine puts me in the same state as when I got up; and I am sure that moderate drinking makes people talk better." JOHNSON. "No, sir; wine gives not light, gay, ideal, hilarity; but tumultuous, noisy, clamorous merriment. I have heard none of those drunken,—nay, drunken is a coarse word,—none of those *vinous flights*." SIR JOSHUA. "Because you have sat by, quite sober, and felt an envy of the happiness of those who were drinking." JOHNSON. "Perhaps, contempt.—And, sir, it is not necessary to be drunk one's self to relish the wit of drunkenness. Do we not judge of the drunken wit of the dialogue between Iago and Cassio, the most excellent in its kind, when we are quite sober? Wit is wit by whatever means it is produced; and, if good, will appear so at all times. I admit that the spirits are raised by drinking as by the common participation of any pleasure: cock-fighting or bear-baiting will raise the spirits of a company, as drinking does, though surely they will not improve conversation. I also admit, that there are some sluggish men who are improved by drinking; as there are fruits which are not good till they are rotten. There are such men, but they are medlars. I indeed allow that there have been a very few men of talents who were improved by drinking; but I maintain that I am right as to the effects of drinking in general: and let it be considered, that there is no position, however false in its universality, which is not true of some particular man." Sir William Forbes said, "Might not a man warmed with wine be like a bottle of beer, which is made brisker by being set before the fire?"—"Nay (said Johnson, laughing), I cannot answer that: that is too much for me."

I observed, that wine did some people harm,

by inflaming, confusing, and irritating their minds; but that the experience of mankind had declared in favour of moderate drinking. JOHNSON. "Sir; I do not say it is wrong to produce self-complacency by drinking; I only deny that it improves the mind. When I drank wine, I scorned to drink it when in company. I have drunk many a bottle by myself; in the first place, because I had need of it to raise my spirits; in the second place, because I would have nobody to witness its effects upon me."

He told us, "almost all his *Ramblers* were written just as they were wanted for the press; that he sent a certain portion of the copy of an essay, and wrote the remainder while the former part of it was printing. When it was wanted, and he had fairly sat down to it, he was sure it would be done."

He said, that for general improvement a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him to; though to be sure, if a man has a science to learn, he must regularly and resolutely advance. He added, "what we read with inclination makes a much stronger impression. If we read without inclination, half the mind is employed in fixing the attention; so there is but one half to be employed on what we read." He told us, he read Fielding's "*Amelia*" through without stopping<sup>3</sup>. He said, "if a man begins to read in the middle of a book, and feels an inclination to go on, let him not quit it to go to the beginning. He may perhaps not feel again the inclination."

Sir Joshua mentioned Mr. Cumberland's *Odes*, which were just published. JOHNSON. "Why,

<sup>3</sup> We have here an involuntary testimony to the excellence of this admirable writer, to whom we have seen that Dr. Johnson directly allowed so little merit.

sir, they would have been thought as good as Odes commonly are if Cumberland had not put his name to them; but a name immediately draws censure, unless it be a name that bears down every thing before it. Nay, Cumberland has made his Odes subsidiary to the fame of another man<sup>4</sup>. They might have run well enough by themselves; but he has not only loaded them with a name, but has made them carry double."

We talked of the Reviews, and Dr. Johnson spoke of them as he did at Thrale's<sup>5</sup>. Sir Joshua said, what I have often thought, that he wondered to find so much good writing employed in them when the authours were to remain unknown, and so could not have the motive of fame. JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, those who write in them write well in order to be paid well."

Soon after this day he went to Bath with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. I had never seen that beautiful city, and wished to take the opportunity of visiting it while Johnson was there. Having written to him, I received the following answer.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"WHY do you talk of neglect? When did I neglect you? If you will come to Bath, we shall all be glad to see you. Come, therefore, as soon as you can.

"But I have a little business for you at London. Bid Francis look in the paper drawer of the chest of drawers in my bedchamber for two cases; one for the Attorney-General, and one for the Solicitor-General. They lie, I think, at the

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Romney, the painter, who has now deservedly established a high reputation.

<sup>5</sup> Page 32 of this Volume.

top of my papers; otherwise they are somewhere else, and will give me more trouble.

“Please to write to me immediately if they can be found. Make my compliments to all our friends round the world, and to Mrs. Williams at home. I am, SIR,

“Your, &c.

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“Search for the papers as soon as you can, that, if it is necessary, I may write to you again before you come down.”

On the 26th of April, I went to Bath; and on my arrival at the Pelican inn, found lying for me an obliging invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, by whom I was agreeably entertained almost constantly during my stay. They were gone to the rooms; but there was a kind note from Dr. Johnson, that he should sit at home all the evening. I went to him directly, and before Mr. and Mrs. Thrale returned, we had by ourselves some hours of tea-drinking and talk.

I shall group together such of his sayings as I preserved during the few days that I was at Bath.

Of a person who differed from him in politicks, he said, “In private life he is a very honest gentleman; but I will not allow him to be so in publick life. People *may* be honest, though they are doing wrong: that is, between their Maker and them. But *we*, who are suffering by their pernicious conduct, are to destroy them. We are sure that ——— acts from interest. We know what his genuine principles were. They who allow their passions to confound the distinctions between right and wrong are criminal. They may be convinced; but they have not come honestly by their conviction.”

It having been mentioned, I know not with what truth, that a certain female political writer, whose doctrines he disliked, had of late become very fond of dress, sat hours together at her toilet, and even put on rouge:—JOHNSON. “She is better employed at her toilet than using her pen. It is better she should be reddening her own cheeks, than blackening other people’s characters.”

He told us that “Addison wrote Budgell’s papers in the Spectator, at least mended them so much, that he made them almost his own; and that Draper, Tonson’s partner, assured Mrs. Johnson, that the much admired Epilogue to ‘The Distressed Mother,’ which came out in Budgell’s name, was in reality written by Addison.”

“The mode of government by one may be ill adapted to a small society, but is best for a great nation. The characteristick of our own government at present is imbecility. The magistrates dare not call the guards for fear of being hanged. The guards will not come for fear of being given up to the blind rage of popular juries.”

Of the father of one of our friends he observed, ‘He never clarified his notions by filtrating them through other minds. He had a canal upon his estate, where at one place the bank was too low.—I dug the canal deeper,” said he.

He told me that “so long ago as 1748 he had read ‘The Grave, a Poem,’” but did not like it much.” I differed from him; for though it is not equal throughout, and is seldom elegantly correct,

“I am sorry that there are no memoirs of the Reverend Robert Blair, the authour of this poem. He was the representative of the ancient family of Blair, of Blair in Ayrshire, but the estate had descended to a female, and afterwards passed to the son of her husband by another marriage. He was minister of the parish of Athelstaneford, where Mr. John Home was his successor; so that it may truly be called classick ground. His son, who is of the same name, and a man eminent for talents and learning, is now, with universal approbation, Solicitor General of Scotland.

it abounds in solemn thought and poetical imagery beyond the common reach. The world has differed from him; for the poem has passed through many editions, and is still much read by people of a serious cast of mind.

A literary lady of large fortune was mentioned, as one who did good to many, but by no means "by stealth," and instead of "blushing to find it fame," acted evidently from vanity. JOHNSON. "I have seen no beings who do as much good from benevolence as she does from whatever motive. If there are such under the earth, or in the clouds, I wish they would come up, or come down. What Soame Jenyns says upon this subject is not to be minded; he is a wit. No, sir; to act from pure benevolence is not possible for finite beings. Human benevolence is mingled with vanity, interest, or some other motive."

He would not allow me to praise a lady then at Bath; observing, "She does not gain upon me, sir; I think her empty headed." He was, indeed; a stern critick upon characters and manners. Even Mrs. Thrale did not escape his friendly animadversion at times. When he and I were one day endeavouring to ascertain, article by article, how one of our friends could possibly spend as much money in his family as he told us he did, she interrupted us by a lively extravagant sally on the expense of clothing his children, describing it in a very ludicrous and fanciful manner. Johnson looked a little angry, and said, "Nay, madam, when you are declaiming, declaim; and when you are calculating, calculate." At another time, when she said, perhaps affectedly, "I don't like to fly." JOHNSON. "With *your* wings, madam; you *must* fly: but have a care, there are *clippers* abroad." How very well was this said, and how fully has experience proved



the truth of it! But have they not *clipped* rather *rudely*, and gone a great deal *closer* than was necessary?

-A gentleman expressed a wish to go and live three years at Otaheité, or New Zealand, in order to obtain a full acquaintance with people so totally different from all that we have ever known; and be satisfied what pure nature can do for man. JOHNSON. "What could you learn, sir? What can savages tell, but what they themselves have seen? Of the past or the invisible they can tell nothing. The inhabitants of Otaheité and New Zealand are not in a state of pure nature; for it is plain they broke off from some other people. Had they grown out of the ground, you might have judged of a state of pure nature. Fanciful people may talk of a mythology being amongst them; but it must be invention. They have once had religion, which has been gradually debased. And what account of their religion can you suppose to be learnt from savages? Only consider; sir, our own state: our religion is in a book; we have an order of men whose duty it is to teach it, we have one day in the week set apart for it, and this is in general pretty well observed: yet ask the first ten gross men you meet, and hear what they can tell you of their religion."

On Monday, April 29, he and I made an excursion to Bristol, where I was entertained with seeing him inquire upon the spot, into the authenticity of "*Rowley's* poetry," as I had seen him inquire upon the spot into the authenticity of "*Ossian's* poetry." George Catcot, the pewterer, who was as zealous for Rowley as Hugh Blair was for *Ossian* (I trust my Reverend friend will excuse the comparison), attended us at our inn, and with a triumphant air of lively simplicity called out, "I'll make Dr. Johnson a con-

vert." Dr. Johnson; at his desire, read aloud some of Chatterton's fabricated verses, while Catcot stood at the back of his chair, moving himself like a pendulum, and beating time with his feet, and now and then looking into Dr. Johnson's face, wondering that he was not yet convinced. We called on Mr. Barret, the surgeon, and saw some of the *originals*; as they were called, which were executed very artificially; but from a careful inspection of them, and a consideration of the circumstances with which they were attended, we were quite satisfied of the imposture, which, indeed, has been clearly demonstrated from internal evidence by several able criticks.

Honest Catcot seemed to pay no attention whatever to any objections, but insisted, as an end of all controversy, that we should go with him to the tower of the church of St. Mary, Redcliff, and *view with our own eyes* the ancient chest in which the manuscripts were found. To this Dr. Johnson; good naturedly agreed; and though troubled with a shortness of breathing, laboured up a long flight of steps, till we came to the place where the wondrous chest stood. "*There* (said Catcot; with a bouncing, confident credulity), *there* is the very chest itself." After this *ocular demonstration*, there was no more to be said. He brought to my recollection a Scotch Highlander, a man of learning too, and who had seen the world, attesting, and at the same time giving his reasons for the authenticity of Fingal:—"I have heard all that poem when I was young."—"Have you, sir? Pray what have you heard?"—"I have heard Ossian, Oscar, and *every one of them*."

Johnson said of Chatterton; "This is the most

extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things."

We were by no means pleased with our inn at Bristol. "Let us see now (said I), how we should describe it." Johnson was ready with his raillery. "Describe it, sir?—Why, it was so bad that Boswell wished to be in Scotland!"

After Dr. Johnson's return to London, I was several times with him at his house, where I occasionally slept, in the room that had been assigned for me. I dined with him at Dr. Taylor's, at General Oglethorpe's, and at General Paoli's. To avoid a tedious minuteness, I shall group together what I have preserved of his conversation during this period also, without specifying each scene where it passed, except one, which will be found so remarkable as certainly to deserve a very particular relation. Where the place or the persons do not contribute to the zest of the conversation, it is unnecessary to encumber my page with mentioning them. To know of what vintage our wine is enables us to judge of its value and to drink it with more relish: but to have the produce of each vine of one vineyard, in the same year, kept separate would serve no purpose. To know that our wine (to use an advertising phrase) is "of the stock of an ambassador lately deceased" heightens its flavour: but it signifies nothing to know the bin where each bottle was once deposited.

"Garrick (he observed) does not play the part of Archer in 'The Beaux Stratagem' well. The gentleman should break out through the footman, which is not the case as he does it."

"Where there is no education, as in savage countries, men will have the upper hand of women. Bodily strength, no doubt, contributes to

this; but it would be so, exclusive of that; for it is mind that always governs. When it comes to dry understanding, man has the better."

"The little volumes entitled '*Respublicæ*,' which are very well done, were a bookseller's work."

"There is much talk of the misery which we cause to the brute creation; but they are recompensed by existence. If they were not useful to man, and therefore protected by him, they would not be nearly so numerous." This argument is to be found in the able and benignant Hutchinson's "Moral Philosophy." But the question is, whether the animals who endure such sufferings of various kinds, for the service and entertainment of man, would accept of existence upon the terms on which they have it. Madame Sevigné, who, though she had many enjoyments, felt with delicate sensibility the prevalence of misery, complains of the task of existence having been imposed upon her without her consent.

"That man is never happy for the present is so true that all his relief from unhappiness is only forgetting himself for a little while. Life is a progress from want to want, not from enjoyment to enjoyment."

"Though many men are nominally intrusted with the administration of hospitals and other publick institutions, almost all the good is done by one man; by whom the rest are driven on; owing to confidence in him, and indolence in them."

"Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son, I think, might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality, and it should be put in the hands of every young gentleman. An elegant manner and easiness of behaviour are acquired gradually and imperceptibly. No man can say,

‘I’ll be genteel.’ There are ten genteel women for one genteel man, because they are more restrained. A man without some degree of restraint is insufferable; but we are all less restrained than women. Were a woman sitting in company to put out her legs before her as most men do, we should be tempted to kick them in.” No man was a more attentive and nice observer of behaviour in those in whose company he happened to be than Johnson; or however strange it may seem to many, had a higher estimation of its refinements. Lord Eliot informs me, that one day when Johnson and he were at dinner in a gentleman’s house in London, upon Lord Chesterfield’s Letters being mentioned, Johnson surprised the company by this sentence: “Every man of any education would rather be called a rascal than accused of deficiency in *the graces*.” Mr. Gibbon, who was present, turned to a lady who knew Johnson well, and lived much with him, and in his quaint manner, tapping his box, addressed her thus: “Don’t you think, madam (looking towards Johnson), that among *all* your acquaintance you could find *one* exception?”—The lady smiled, and seemed to acquiesce.

“I read (said he) Sharpe’s Letters on Italy over again, when I was at Bath. There is a great deal of matter in them.”

“Mrs. Williams was angry that Thrale’s family did not send regularly to her every time they heard from me while I was in the Hebrides.—Little people are apt to be jealous: but they should not be jealous; for they ought to consider that superiour attention will necessarily be paid to superiour fortune or rank. Two persons may have equal merit, and on that account may have an equal claim to attention; but one of them may have also fortune and rank; and so may have a double claim.”

Talking of his notes on Shakspeare, he said, "I despise those who do not see that I am right in the passage where *as* is repeated, and 'asses of great charge' introduced. That on 'to be, or not to be,' is disputable".

A gentleman, whom I found sitting with him one morning, said, that in his opinion the character of an infidel was more detestable than that of a man notoriously guilty of an atrocious crime. I differed from him, because we are surer of the odiousness of the one than of the error of the other. JOHNSON. "Sir, I agree with him; for the infidel would be guilty of any crime, if he were inclined to it."

"Many things which are false are transmitted from book to book, and gain credit in the world. One of these is the cry against the evil of luxury. Now the truth is, that luxury produces much good. Take the luxury of buildings in London. Does it not produce real advantage in the conveniency and elegance of accommodation, and this all from the exertion of industry? People will tell you, with a melancholy face, how many builders are in gaol. It is plain they are in gaol, not for building; for rents are not fallen.—A man gives half a guinea for a dish of green peas. How much gardening does this occasion? how many labourers must the competition to have such things early in the market keep in employment? You will hear it said, very gravely, 'Why was not the half-guinea, thus spent in luxury, given to the poor? To how many might it have afforded a good meal.' Alas! has it not gone to the *industrious* poor, whom it is better to support

\* It may be observed, that Mr. Malone, in his very valuable edition of Shakspeare, has fully vindicated Dr. Johnson from the idle censures which the first of these notes has given rise to. The interpretation of the other passage, which Dr. Johnson allows to be *disputable*, he has clearly shown to be erroneous.

than the *idle* poor? You are much surer that you are doing good when you *pay* money to those who work, as the recompense of their labour, than when you *give* money merely in charity. Suppose the ancient luxury of a dish of peacock's brains were to be revived, how many carcases would be left to the poor at a cheap rate: and as to the rout that is made about people who are ruined by extravagance, it is no matter to the nation that some individuals suffer. When so much general productive exertion is the consequence of luxury, the nation does not care though there are debtors in gaol: nay, they would not care though their creditors were there too."

The uncommon vivacity of General Oglethorpe's mind, and variety of knowledge, having sometimes made his conversation seem too desultory, Johnson observed, "Oglethorpe, sir, never *completes* what he has to say."

He on the same account made a similar remark on Patrick Lord Elibank: "Sir, there is nothing *conclusive* in his talk."

When I complained of having dined at a splendid table without hearing one sentence of conversation worthy of being remembered, he said, "Sir, there seldom is any such conversation." BOSWELL. "Why then meet at table?" JOHNSON. "Why to eat and drink together, and to promote kindness; and, sir, this is better done when there is no solid conversation; for when there is, people differ in opinion and get into bad humour, or some of the company who are not capable of such conversation are left out, and feel themselves uneasy. It was for this reason Sir Robert Walpole said he always talked bawdy at his table, because in that all could join."

Being irritated by hearing a gentleman ask Mr. Levett a variety of questions concerning him,

when he was sitting by, he broke out, "Sir, you have but two topicks, yourself and me. I am sick of both." "A man (said he) should not talk of himself, nor much of any particular person. He should take care not to be made a proverb; and, therefore, should avoid having any one topick of which people can say, 'We shall hear him upon it.' There was a Dr. Oldfield, who was always talking of the Duke of Marlborough. He came into a coffee-house one day, and told that his Grace had spoken in the House of Lords for half an hour. 'Did he indeed speak for half an hour?' (said Belchier, the surgeon).—'Yes.'—'And what did he say of Dr. Oldfield?'—'Nothing.'—'Why then, sir, he was very ungrateful; for Dr. Oldfield could not have spoken for a quarter of an hour without saying something of him.' "

"Every man is to take existence on the terms on which it is given to him. To some men it is given on condition of not taking liberties, which other men may take without much harm. One may drink wine, and be nothing the worse for it; on another, wine may have effects so inflammatory as to injure him both in body and mind, and perhaps make him commit something for which he may deserve to be hanged."

"Lord Hailes's 'Annals of Scotland' have not that painted form which is the taste of this age; but it is a book which will always sell, it has such a stability of dates, such a certainty of facts, and such a punctuality of citation. I never before read Scotch history with certainty."

I asked him whether he would advise me to read the Bible with a commentary, and what commentaries he would recommend. JOHNSON. "To be sure, sir, I would have you read the Bible with a commentary; and I would recom-



mend Lowth and Patrick on the Old Testament, and Hammond on the New."

During my stay in London this spring, I solicited his attention to another law case, in which I was engaged. In the course of a contested election for the Borough of Dumfermline, which I attended as one of my friend Colonel (afterwards Sir Archibald) Campbell's counsel; one of his political agents, who was charged with having been unfaithful to his employer, and having deserted to the opposite party for a pecuniary reward—attacked very rudely in a newspaper the Reverend Mr. James Thomson, one of the ministers of that place, on account of a supposed allusion to him in one of his sermons. Upon this the minister, on a subsequent Sunday, arraigned him by name from the pulpit with some severity; and the agent, after the sermon was over, rose up and asked the minister aloud, "What bribe he had received for telling so many lies from the chair of verity." I was present at this very extraordinary scene. The person arraigned, and his father and brother, who also had a share both of the reproof from the pulpit and in the retaliation, brought an action against Mr. Thomson, in the Court of Session; for defamation and damages; and I was one of the counsel for the reverend defendant. The *Liberty of the pulpit* was our great ground of defence; but we argued also on the provocation of the previous attack, and on the instant retaliation. The Court of Session, however—the fifteen Judges, who are at the same time the Jury, decided against the minister, contrary to my humble opinion; and several of them expressed themselves with indignation against him. He was an aged gentleman, formerly a military chaplain, and a man of high spirit and honour. Johnson was satisfied that the judgment was

wrong, and dictated to me the following argument in confutation of it:

“Of the censure pronounced from the pulpit, our determination must be formed, as in other cases, by a consideration of the act itself, and the particular circumstances with which it is invested.

“The right of censure and rebuke seems necessarily appendant to the pastoral office. He, to whom the care of a congregation is intrusted is considered as the shepherd of a flock, as the teacher of a school, as the father of a family. As a shepherd tending not his own sheep, but those of his master, he is answerable for those that stray, and that lose themselves by straying. But no man can be answerable for losses which he has not power to prevent, or for vagrancy which he has not authority to restrain.

“As a teacher giving instruction for wages, and liable to reproach, if those whom he undertakes to inform make no proficiency, he must have the power of enforcing attendance; of awakening negligence, and repressing contradiction.

“As a father, he possesses the paternal authority of admonition, rebuke, and punishment.—He cannot, without reducing his office to an empty name; be hindered from the exercise of any practice necessary to stimulate the idle, to reform the vicious, to check the petulant, and correct the stubborn.

“If we inquire into the practice of the primitive church, we shall, I believe, find the ministers of the word exercising the whole authority of this complicated character. We shall find them not only encouraging the good by exhortation, but terrifying the wicked by reproof and denunciation. In the earliest ages of the Church, while religion was yet pure from secular advan-

tages, the punishment of sinners was publick censure and open penance; penalties inflicted merely by ecclesiastical authority, at a time while the church had yet no help from the civil power, while the hand of the magistrate lifted only the rod of persecution; and when governours were ready to afford a refuge to all those who fled from clerical authority.

“That the Church; therefore, had once a power of publick censure is evident, because that power was frequently exercised. That it borrowed not its power from the civil authority is likewise certain, because civil authority was at that time its enemy.

“The hour came at length, when, after three hundred years of struggle and distress, Truth took possession of imperial power, and the civil laws lent their aid to the ecclesiastical constitutions. The magistrate from that time cooperated with the priest, and clerical sentences were made efficacious by secular force. But the State, when it came to the assistance of the Church, had no intention to diminish its authority. Those rebukes and those censures which were lawful before were lawful still. But they had hitherto operated only upon voluntary submission. The refractory and contemptuous were at first in no danger of temporal severities, except what they might suffer from the reproaches of conscience or the detestation of their fellow Christians.—When religion obtained the support of law, if admonitions and censures had no effect, they were seconded by the magistrates with coercion and punishment.

“It therefore appears from ecclesiastical history that the right of inflicting shame by publick censure has been always considered as inherent in the Church; and that this right was not con-

ferred by the civil power; for it was exercised when the civil power operated against it. By the civil power it was never taken away; for the Christian magistrate interposed his office, not to rescue sinners from censure, but to supply more powerful means of reformation; to add pain where shame was insufficient; and when men were proclaimed unworthy of the society of the faithful, to restrain them by imprisonment from spreading abroad the contagion of wickedness.

“It is not improbable that from this acknowledged power of publick censure grew in time the practice of auricular confession. Those who dreaded the blast of publick reprehension were willing to submit themselves to the priest, by a private accusation of themselves; and to obtain a reconciliation with the Church by a kind of clandestine absolution and invisible penance: conditions with which the priest would, in times of ignorance and corruption, easily comply, as they increased his influence, by adding the knowledge of secret sins to that of notorious offences; and enlarged his authority, by making him the sole arbiter of the terms of reconciliation.

“From this bondage the Reformation set us free. The minister has no longer power to press into the retirements of conscience, to torture us by interrogatories, or put himself in possession of our secrets and our lives. But though we have thus controled his usurpations, his just and original power remains unimpaired. He may still see, though he may not pry; he may yet hear, though he may not question. And that knowledge which his eyes and ears force upon him it is still his duty to use, for the benefit of his flock. A father, who lives near a wicked neighbour, may forbid a son to frequent his company. A minister, who has in his congregation a

man of open and scandalous wickedness, may warn his parishioners to shun his conversation. To warn them is not only lawful, but not to warn them would be criminal. He may warn them one by one in friendly converse, or by a parochial visitation. But if he may warn each man singly, what shall forbid him to warn them all together? Of that which is to be made known to all, how is there any difference whether it be communicated to each singly or to all together? What is known to all must necessarily be publick. Whether it shall be publick at once, or publick by degrees, is the only question. And of a sudden and solemn publication the impression is deeper, and the warning more effectual.

“It may easily be urged, if a minister be thus left at liberty to delate sinners from the pulpit, and to publish at will the crimes of a parishioner, he may often blast the innocent and distress the timorous. He may be suspicious, and condemn without evidence; he may be rash, and judge without examination; he may be severe, and treat slight offences with too much harshness; he may be malignant and partial, and gratify his private interest or resentment under the shelter of his pastoral character.

“Of all this there is possibility, and of all this there is danger. But if possibility of evil be to exclude good, no good ever can be done. If nothing is to be attempted in which there is danger, we must all sink into hopeless inactivity. The evils that may be feared from this practice arise not from any defect in the institution, but from the infirmities of human nature. Power, in whatever hands it is placed, will be sometimes improperly exerted; yet courts of law must judge, though they will sometimes judge amiss. A father must instruct his children, though he himself may

often want instruction. A minister must censure sinners, though his censure may be sometimes erroneous by want of judgment, and sometimes unjust by want of honesty.

“If we examine the circumstances of the present case, we shall find the sentence neither erroneous nor unjust; we shall find no breach of private confidence, no intrusion into secret transactions. The fact was notorious and indubitable; so easy to be proved that no proof was desired. The act was base and treacherous, the perpetration insolent and open, and the example naturally mischievous. The minister, however, being retired and recluse, had not yet heard what was publicly known throughout the parish; and on occasion of a publick election, warned his people, according to his duty, against the crimes which publick elections frequently produce. His warning was felt by one of his parishioners, as pointed particularly at himself. But instead of producing, as might be wished, private compunction and immediate reformation, it kindled only rage and resentment. He charged his minister, in a publick paper, with scandal, defamation, and falsehood. The minister, thus reproached, had his own character to vindicate, upon which his pastoral authority must necessarily depend. To be charged with a defamatory lie is an injury which no man patiently endures in common life. To be charged with polluting the pastoral office with scandal and falsehood was a violation of character still more atrocious, as it affected not only his personal but his clerical veracity. His indignation naturally rose in proportion to his honesty, and with all the fortitude of injured honesty, he dared his calumniator in the church, and at once exonerated himself from censure, and rescued his flock from deception and from dan-

ger. The man whom he accuses pretends not to be innocent; or at least only pretends; for he declines a trial. The crime of which he is accused has frequent opportunities and strong temptations. It has already spread far, with much depravation of private morals and much injury to publick happiness. To warn the people, therefore, against it was not wanton and officious, but necessary and pastoral.

“What then is the fault with which this worthy minister is charged? He has usurped no dominion over conscience. He has exerted no authority in support of doubtful and controverted opinions. He has not dragged into light a bashful and corrigible sinner. His censure was directed against a breach of morality, against an act which no man justifies. The man who appropriated this censure to himself is evidently and notoriously guilty. His consciousness of his own wickedness incited him to attack his faithful reprover with open insolence and printed accusations. Such an attack made defence necessary; and we hope it will be at last decided that the means of defence were just and lawful.”

When I read this to Mr. Burke, he was highly pleased, and exclaimed, “Well; he does his work in a workmanlike manner.”

Mr. Thomson wished to bring the cause by appeal before the House of Lords, but was dissuaded by the advice of the noble person who lately presided so ably in that Most Honourable House, and who was then Attorney General. As my readers will no doubt be glad also to read the

\* As a proof of Dr. Johnson's extraordinary powers of composition, it appears from the original manuscript of this excellent dissertation, of which he dictated the first eight paragraphs on the 10th of May, and the remainder on the 13th, that there are in the whole only seven corrections, or rather variations, and those not considerable. Such were at once the vigorous and accurate emanations of his mind.

opinion of this eminent man upon the same subject, I shall here insert it.

### CASE.

“THERE is herewith laid before you,

“1. Petition for the Reverend Mr. James Thomson, minister of Dumfermline.

“2. Answers thereto.

“3. Copy of the judgment of the Court of Session upon both.

“4. Notes of the opinions of the Judges, being the reasons upon which their decree is grounded.

“These papers you will please to peruse, and give your opinion,

“Whether there is a probability of the above decree of the Court of Session’s being reversed, if Mr. Thomson should appeal from the same?”

“I DON’T think the appeal advisable: not only because the value of the judgment is in no degree adequate to the expense; but because there are many chances that, upon the general complexion of the case, the impression will be taken to the disadvantage of the appellant.

“It is impossible to approve the style of that sermon. But the *complaint* was not less ungracious from that man, who had behaved so ill by his original libel, and at the time when he received the reproach he complains of. In the last article, all the plaintiffs are equally concerned. It struck me also with some wonder, that the Judges should think so much fervour apposite to the occasion of reproving the defendant for a little excess.



“ Upon the matter, however, I agree with them in condemning the behaviour of the minister; and in thinking it a subject fit for ecclesiastical censure; and even for an action, if any individual could qualify<sup>1</sup> a wrong, and a damage arising from it. But this I doubt. The circumstance of publishing the reproach in a pulpit, though extremely indecent and culpable in another view, does not constitute a different sort of wrong, or any other rule of law, than would have obtained, if the same words had been pronounced elsewhere. I don't know whether there be any difference in the law of Scotland, in the definition of slander, before the Commissaries or the Court of Session. The common law of England does not give way to actions for every reproachful word. An action cannot be brought for general damages, upon any words which import less than an offence cognizable by law; consequently no action could have been brought here for the words in question. Both laws admit the truth to be a justification in action *for words*; and the law of England does the same in actions for libels. The judgment, therefore, seems to me to have been wrong, in that the Court repelled that defence.

“ E. THURLOW.”

I am now to record a very curious incident in Dr. Johnson's Life, which fell under my own observation; of which *pars magna fui*, and which I am persuaded will, with the liberal minded, be much to his credit.

My desire of being acquainted with celebrated men of every description had made me, much

<sup>1</sup> It is curious to observe that Lord Thurlow has here, perhaps in compliment to North Britain, made use of a term of the Scotch law, which to an English reader may require explanation. To *qualify* a wrong is to point out and establish it.

about the same time, obtain an introduction to Dr. Samuel Johnson and to John Wilkes, Esq. Two men more different could perhaps not be selected out of all mankind. They had even attacked one another with some asperity in their writings; yet I lived in habits of friendship with both. I could fully relish the excellence of each; for I have ever delighted in that intellectual chymistry which can separate good qualities from evil in the same person.

Sir John Pringle, "mine own friend and my father's friend," between whom and Dr. Johnson I in vain wished to establish an acquaintance, as I respected and lived in intimacy with both of them, observed to me once, very ingeniously, "It is not in friendship as in mathematicks, where two things, each equal to a third, are equal between themselves. You agree with Johnson as a middle quality, and you agree with me as a middle quality; but Johnson and I should not agree." Sir John was not sufficiently flexible; so I desisted; knowing, indeed, that the repulsion was equally strong on the part of Johnson; who, I know not from what cause, unless his being a Scotchman, had formed a very erroneous opinion of Sir John. But I conceived an irresistible wish, if possible, to bring Dr. Johnson and Mr. Wilkes together. How to manage it was a nice and difficult matter.

My worthy booksellers and friends, Messieurs Dilly in the Poultry, at whose hospitable and well covered table I have seen a greater number of literary men than at any other, except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, had invited me to meet Mr. Wilkes and some more gentlemen on Wednesday, May 15. "Pray (said I), let us have Dr. Johnson."—"What, with Mr. Wilkes? not for the world (said Mr. Edward Dilly): Dr.



there." JOHNSON. "And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is that to *me*, sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but really it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally." BOSWELL. "Pray forgive me, sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me." Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed.

Upon the much expected Wednesday, I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffeting his books, as upon a former occasion<sup>3</sup>, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad. "How is this, sir? (said I). Don't you recollect that you are to dine at Mr. Dilly's?" JOHNSON. "Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly's: it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams." BOSWELL. "But, my dear sir, you know you were engaged to Mr. Dilly, and I told him so. He will expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come." JOHNSON. "You must talk to Mrs. Williams about this."

Here was a sad dilemma. I feared that what I was so confident I had secured would yet be frustrated. He had accustomed himself to show Mrs. Williams such a degree of humane attention as frequently imposed some restraint upon him; and I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir. I hastened down stairs to the blind lady's room, and told her I was in great uneasiness, for Dr. Johnson had engaged to me to

<sup>3</sup> See p. 10 of this volume.

dine this day at Mr. Dilly's, but that he had told me he had forgotten his engagement, and had ordered dinner at home. "Yes, sir (said she, pretty peevishly), Dr. Johnson is to dine at home."—"Madam (said I), his respect for you is such, that I know he will not leave you unless you absolutely desire it. But as you have so much of his company, I hope you will be good enough to forego it for a day; as Mr. Dilly is a very worthy man, has frequently had agreeable parties at his house for Dr. Johnson, and will be vexed if the Doctor neglects him to day. And then, madam, be pleased to consider my situation; I carried the message, and I assured Mr. Dilly that Dr. Johnson was to come; and no doubt he has made a dinner, and invited a company, and boasted of the honour he expected to have. I shall be quite disgraced if the Doctor is not there." She gradually softened to my solicitations, which were certainly as earnest as most entreaties to ladies upon any occasion, and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr. Johnson, "That, all things considered, she thought he should certainly go." I flew back to him, still in dust, and careless of what should be the event, "indifferent in his choice to go or stay;" but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs. Williams's consent, he roared, "Frank, a clean shirt;" and was very soon dressed. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him to set out for Gretna Green.

When we entered Mr. Dilly's drawing-room, he found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. I observed him whispering to Mr. Dilly, "Who is that gentleman, sir?"—"Mr. Arthur Lee."—

JOHNSON. "Too, too, too" (under his breath), which was one of his habitual mutterings. Mr. Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a *patriot* but an *American*. He was afterwards minister from the United States at the court of Madrid.—"And who is the gentleman in lace?"—"Mr. Wilkes, sir." This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself, and taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat and read, or at least kept his eye upon it intently for some time, till he composed himself. His feelings, I dare say, were awkward enough. But he no doubt recollected his having rated me for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company, and he, therefore, resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of those whom he might chance to meet.

The cheering sound of "Dinner is upon the table" dissolved his reverie, and we *all* sat down without any symptom of ill humour. There were present, besides Mr. Wilkes; and Mr. Arthur Lee, who was an old companion of mine when he studied physick at Edinburgh, Mr. (now Sir John) Miller, Dr. Lettsom, and Mr. Slater the druggist. Mr. Wilkes placed himself next to Dr. Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness that he gained upon him insensibly. No man eat more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Mr. Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. "Pray give me leave, sir—It is better here—A little of the brown—Some fat, sir—A little of the stuffing—Some gravy—Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter—Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange;—or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest."—

"Sir, sir, I am obliged to you, sir," cried Johnson, bowing, and turning his head to him with a look for some time of "surly virtue<sup>4</sup>," but, in a short while, of complacency.

Foote being mentioned, Johnson said, "He is not a good mimick." One of the company added, "A merry Andrew, a buffoon." JOHNSON. "But he has wit too, and is not deficient in ideas, or in fertility and variety of imagery, and not empty of reading; he has knowledge enough to fill up his part. One species of wit he has in an eminent degree, that of escape. You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, sir, when you think you have got him—like an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has a great range for wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse. Garrick is under many restraints from which Foote is free." WILKES. "Garrick's wit is more like Lord Chesterfield's." JOHNSON. "The first time I was in company with Foote was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him. But the dog was so very comical that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. No, sir, he was irresistible<sup>5</sup>. He upon one occasion experienced, in an extraordinary degree, the efficacy of his powers of entertaining. Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small beer brewer, and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring customers amongst his numerous acquaintance. Fitz-

<sup>4</sup> Johnson's "London, a Poem," v. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Foote told me, that Johnson said of him "For loud obstreperous broad-faced mirth, I know not his equal."

herbert was one who took his small beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being afraid of offending their master, who they knew liked Foote much as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy, who was rather a favourite, to be their deputy, and deliver their remonstrance; and, having invested him with the whole authority of the kitchen, he was to inform Mr. Fitzherbert, in all their names, upon a certain day, that they would drink Foote's small beer no longer. On that day Foote happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted with Foote's stories, and merriment, and grimace, that, when he went down stairs, he told them, 'This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message. I will drink his small beer.'

Somebody observed that Garrick could not have done this. WILKES. "Garrick would have made the small beer still smaller. He is now leaving the stage; but he will play *Scrub* all his life." I knew that Johnson would let nobody attack Garrick but himself, as Garrick said to me, and I had heard him praise his liberality; so to bring out his commendation of his celebrated pupil, I said, loudly, "I have heard Garrick is liberal." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man in England that I am acquainted with, and that not from ostentatious views. Garrick was very poor when he began life; so when he came to have money, he probably was very unskilful in giving away, and saved when he should not. But Garrick began to be liberal as soon as he could; and I am of opinion, the reputation of avarice which he has had has been very lucky for him,



and prevented his having had many enemies. You despise a man for avarice, but do not hate him. Garrick might have been much better attacked for living with more splendour than is suitable to a player: if they had had the wit to have assaulted him in that quarter, they might have galled him more. But they have kept clamouring about his avarice, which has rescued him from much obloquy and envy."

Talking of the great difficulty of obtaining authentic information for biography, Johnson told us, "When I was a young fellow, I wanted to write the 'Life of Dryden;' and, in order to get materials, I applied to the only two persons then alive who had seen him; these were old Swinney and old Cibber. Swinney's information was no more than this, 'That at Will's Coffee-house Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter, and was then called his winter chair; and that it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and was then called his summer chair.' Cibber could tell no more but 'That he remembered him a decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's.' You are to consider that Cibber was then at a great distance from Dryden, had perhaps one leg only in the room, and durst not draw in the other." BOSWELL. "Yet Cibber was a man of observation?" JOHNSON. "I think not." BOSWELL. "You will allow his 'Apology' to be well done." JOHNSON. "Very well done, to be sure, sir. That book is a striking proof of the justice of Pope's remark:

'Each might his several province well command,  
Would all but stoop to what they understand.'

BOSWELL. "And his plays are good." JOHNSON. "Yes; but that was his trade; *l'esprit du corps*: he had been all his life among players and

play writers. I wondered that he had so little to say in conversation, for he had kept the best company, and learned all that can be got by the ear. . . He abused Pindar to me, and then showed me an ode of his own, with an absurd couplet, making a linnet soar on an eagle's wing<sup>6</sup>. I told him that when the ancients made a simile, they always made it like something real."

Mr. Wilkes remarked, that "among all the bold flights of Shakspeare's imagination, the boldest was making Birnam-wood march to Dunsinane; creating a wood where there never was a shrub; a wood in Scotland! ha! ha! ha!" And he also observed, that "the clannish slavery of the Highlands of Scotland was the single exception to Milton's remark of 'The Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty,' being worshiped in all hilly countries." — "When I was at Inverary (said he), on a visit to my old friend, Archibald Duke of Argyle, his dependents congratulated me on being such a favourite of his Grace. I said, 'It is then, gentlemen, truly lucky for me; for if I had displeased the Duke, and he had wished it, there is not a Campbell among you but would have been ready to bring John Wilkes's head to him in a charger. It would have been only

'Off with his head! So much for *Aylesbury*.'

I was then member for Aylesbury."

Dr. Johnson and Mr. Wilkes talked of the contested passage in Horace's Art of Poetry, *Difficile est propriè communia dicere*." Mr. Wilkes, according to my note, gave the interpretation thus: "It is difficult to speak with propriety of common things; as, if a poet had to speak of Queen Caroline drinking tea, he must endeavour to avoid the vulgarity of cups and saucers." But

<sup>6</sup> See Vol. 1. p. 341.

upon reading my note, he tells me what he meant to say, that the word *communia* being a Roman law term, signifies here things *communis juris*, that is to say, what have never yet been treated by any body; and this appears clearly from what followed,

“—————Tuque  
*Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus  
 Quàm si proferres ignota indictaque primus.*”

You will easier make a tragedy out of the *Iliad* than on any subject not handled before. JOHN-

<sup>7</sup> My very pleasant friend himself, as well as others who remember old stories, will no doubt be surprised when I observe that John Wilkes here shows himself to be of the Warburtonian School. It is nevertheless true, as appears from Dr. Hurd the Bishop of Worcester's very elegant commentary and notes on the “*Epistola ad Pisones*.”

It is necessary to a fair consideration of the question that the whole passage in which the words occur should be kept in view:

“*Si quid inexpertum scenæ committis, et audes  
 Personam formare notam, seruetur ad imum  
 Qualis ab incerto processerit, et sibi constet.  
 Difficile est propriè communia dicere: tuque  
 Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus,  
 Quàm si proferres ignota indictaque primus.  
 Publica materies privati juris erit, si  
 Non circa rilem patulumque moraberis orbem,  
 Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus.  
 Interpres; nec desilies imitator in arctum  
 Unde pedem proferre pudor vetat aut operis lex.*”

The “Commentary” thus illustrates it: “But the formation of quite new characters is a work of great difficulty and hazard. For here there is no generally received and fixed archetype to work after, but every one judges of common right according to the extent and comprehension of his own idea; therefore he advises to labour and resist old characters and subjects, particularly those made known and authorized by the practice of Homer and the Epic writers.”

The “Note” is

“*Difficile est propriè communia dicere.*” Lambin's Comment is “*Communias hoc loco appellat Horatius argumenta fabularum à nullo adhuc tractata: et ita, quæ cuius exposita sunt et in medio quodammodo posita, quasi vacua et à nemine occupata.*” And that this is the true meaning of *communias* is evidently fixed by the words *ignota indictaque*, which are explanatory of it; so that the sense given it in the commentary is unquestionably the right one. Yet, notwithstanding the clearness of the case, a late critic has this strange passage: “*Difficile videtur esse propriè communias dicere, hoc est, materiam vulgarem,*

son. "He means that it is difficult to appropriate to particular persons qualities which are common to all mankind, as Homer has done."

*notam et à medio petitam, ita immutare atque exornare, ut nova et scriptori propria videatur, ultro concedimus; et maximi procul dubio ponderis ista est observatio. Sed omnibus utrinque collatis, et tum difficilis tum reuusti, tam iudicii quam ingenii ratione habitâ, major videtur esse gloria fabulam formare penitus novam, quam veterem, utcunque mutalam, de novo exhibere.*" (Post. Præl. v. ii. p. 164). Where having first put a wrong construction on the word *communis*, he employs it to introduce an impertinent criticism. For where does the poet prefer the glory of resitting old subjects to that of inventing new ones? The contrary is implied in what he urges about the superiour difficulty of the latter, from which he dissuades his countrymen, only in respect of their abilities and inexperience in these matters; and in order to cultivate in them, which is the main view of the Epistle, a spirit of correctness, by sending them to the old subjects treated by the Greek writers.

For my own part (with all deference for Dr. Hurd, who thinks the case clear), I consider the passage, "*Difficile est propriè communia dicere*," to be a *crux* for the critics on Horace.

The explication which my Lord of Worcester treats with so much contempt is nevertheless countenanced by authority which I find quoted by the learned Baxter in his edition of Horace, "*Difficile est propriè communia dicere*, h. e. res vulgares disortis verbis enarrare, vel humilo thoma cum dignitate tractare. *Difficile est communes res propriis explicare verbis.* Vet. Schol." I was much disappointed to find that the great critic, Dr. Bentley, has no note upon this very difficult passage, as from his vigorous and illuminate mind I should have expected to receive more satisfaction than I have yet had.

Sanadon thus treats of it: "*Propriè communia dicere; c'est à dire, qu'il n'est pas aisé de former à ces personnages d'imagination, des caractères particuliers et cependant vraisemblables. Comme l'on a été le maître de les former tels qu'on a voulu, les fautes que l'on fait en cela sont moins pardonnables. C'est pourquoi Horace conseille de prendre toujours des sujets connus, tels que sont, par exemple, ceux que l'on peut tirer des poèmes d'Homère.*"

And Dacier observes upon it: "*Après avoir marqué les deux qualités qu'il faut donner aux personnages qu'on invente, il conseille aux Poètes tragiques, de n'user pas trop facilement de cette liberté qu'ils ont d'en inventer, car il est très difficile de réussir dans ces nouveaux caractères. Il est mal aisé, dit Horace, de traiter proprement, c'est à dire convenablement, des sujets communs; c'est à dire, des sujets inventés, et qui n'ont aucun fondement ni dans l'Histoire ni dans la Fable; et il les appelle communs, parce qu'ils sont en disposition à tout le monde, et que tout le monde a le droit de les inventer, et qu'ils sont, comme on dit, au premier occupant.*" See his observations at large on this expression and the following.

After all, I cannot help entertaining some doubt whether the words, "*Difficile est propriè communia dicere*," may not have been thrown in by Horace to form a separate article in a "choice of difficulties" which

WILKES. "We have no City Poet now: that is an office which has gone into disuse. The last was Elkanah Settle. There is something in names which one cannot help feeling. Now *Elkanah Settle* sounds so queer, who can expect much from that name? We should have no hesitation to give it for John Dryden, in preference to Elkanah Settle, from the names only, without knowing their different merits." JOHNSON. "I suppose, sir, Settle did as well for Aldermen in his time as John Home could do now. Where did Beckford and Trecothick learn English?"

Mr. Arthur Lee mentioned some Scotch who had taken possession of a barren part of America, and wondered why they should choose it. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, all barrenness is comparative. The *Scotch* would not know it to be barren."

BOSWELL. "Come, come, he is flattering the English. You have now been in Scotland, sir, and say if you did not see meat and drink enough there."

JOHNSON. "Why yes, sir; meat and drink enough to give the inhabitants sufficient strength to run away from home." All these quick and lively sallies were said sportively, quite in jest, and with a smile, which showed that he meant only wit. Upon this topick he and Mr. Wilkes could perfectly assimilate; here was a bond of union be-

a poet has to encounter who chooses a new subject; in which case it must be uncertain which of the various explanations is the true one, and every reader has a right to decide as it may strike his own fancy. And even should the words be understood, as they generally are, to be connected both with what goes before and what comes after, the exact sense cannot be absolutely ascertained; for instance, whether *propriè* is meant to signify in an *appropriated manner*, as Dr. Johnson here understands it, or, as it is often used by Cicero, *with propriety*, or *elegantly*. In short, it is a rare instance of a defect in perspicuity in an admirable writer, who with almost every species of excellence, is peculiarly remarkable for that quality. The length of this note perhaps requires an apology. Many of my readers, I doubt not, will admit that a critical discussion of a passage in a favourite classic is very engaging.

tween them; and I was conscious that, as both of them had visited Caledonia, both were fully satisfied of the strange narrow ignorance of those who imagine that it is a land of famine. But they amused themselves with persevering in the old jokes. When I claimed a superiority for Scotland over England in one respect, that no man can be arrested there for a debt merely because another swears it against him; but there must first be the judgment of a court of law ascertaining its justice; and that a seizure of the person, before judgment is obtained, can take place only if his creditor should swear that he is about to fly from the country, or, as it is technically expressed, is in *meditatione fugæ*. WILKES. "That, I should think, may be safely sworn of all the Scotch nation." JOHNSON. (To Mr. Wilkes) "You must know, sir, I lately took my friend Boswell, and showed him genuine civilized life in an English provincial town. I turned him loose at Lichfield, my native city, that he might see for once real civility: for you know he lives among savages in Scotland and among rakes in London." WILKES. "Except when he is with grave, sober, decent people, like you and me." JOHNSON, (smiling). "And we ashamed of him." They were quite frank and easy. Johnson told the story of his asking Mrs. Macaulay to allow her footman to sit down with them, to prove the ridiculousness of the argument for the equality of mankind; and he said to me afterwards, with a nod of satisfaction, "You saw Mr. Wilkes acquiesced." Wilkes talked with all imaginable freedom of the ludicrous title given to the Attorney General, *Diabolus Regis*; adding, "I have reason to know something about that officer; for I was prosecuted for a libel." Johnson, who many people would have supposed must



cessful *negotiation*; and pleasantly said, "that there was nothing equal to it in the whole history of the *Corps Diplomatique*."

I attended Dr. Johnson home, and had the satisfaction to hear him tell Mrs. Williams how much he had been pleased with Mr. Wilkes's company, and what an agreeable day he had passed.

I talked a good deal to him of the celebrated Margaret Caroline Rudd, whom I had visited, induced by the fame of her talents, address, and irresistible power of fascination. To a lady who disapproved of my visiting her, he said, on a former occasion, "Nay, madam, Boswell is in the right; I should have visited her myself, were it not that they have now a trick of putting every thing into the newspapers." This evening he exclaimed, "I envy him his acquaintance with Mrs. Rudd."

I mentioned a scheme which I had of making a tour to the Isle of Man, and giving a full account of it; and that Mr. Burke had playfully suggested as a motto,

"The proper study of mankind is MAN."

JOHNSON. "Sir, you will get more by the book than the jaunt will cost you; so you will have your diversion for nothing, and add to your reputation."

On the evening of the next day I took leave of him, being to set out for Scotland. I thanked him with great warmth for all his kindness. "Sir (said he), you are very welcome. Nobody repays it with more."

How very false is the notion that has gone round the world of the rough, and passionate, and harsh manners of this great and good man. That



he had occasional sallies of heat of temper, and that he was sometimes, perhaps, too "easily provoked" by absurdity and folly, and sometimes too desirous of triumph in colloquial contest, must be allowed. The quickness both of his perception and sensibility disposed him to sudden explosions of satire: to which his extraordinary readiness of wit was a strong and almost irresistible incitement. To adopt one of the finest images in Mr. Home's "Douglas,"

" ————— On each glance of thought  
Decision followed, as the thunderbolt  
Pursues the flash!" —————

I admit that the beadle within him was often so eager to apply the lash that the judge had not time to consider the case with sufficient deliberation.

That he was occasionally remarkable for violence of temper may be granted; but let us ascertain the degree, and not let it be supposed that he was in a perpetual rage, and never without a club in his hand to knock down every one who approached him. On the contrary, the truth is, that by much the greatest part of his time he was civil, obliging, nay, polite in the true sense of the word; so much so that many gentlemen who were long acquainted with him never received or even heard a strong expression from him.

The following letters concerning an Epitaph which he wrote for the monument of Dr. Goldsmith, in Westminster Abbey, afford at once a proof of his unaffected modesty, his carelessness as to his own writings, and of the great respect which he entertained for the taste and judgment of the excellent and eminent person to whom they are addressed:

"TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

"DEAR SIR,

"I HAVE been kept away from you I know not well how, and of these vexatious hinderances I know not when there will be an end. I therefore send you the poor dear Doctor's epitaph. Read it first yourself; and if you then think it right, show it to the Club. I am, you know, willing to be corrected. If you think any thing much amiss, keep it to yourself till we come together. I have sent two copies, but prefer the card. The dates must be settled by Dr. Percy. I am, SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"May 16, 1776."

TO THE SAME.

"SIR,

"MISS REYNOLDS has a mind to send the Epitaph to Dr. Beattie; I am very willing, but having no copy, cannot immediately recollect it. She tells me you have lost it. Try to recollect, and put down as much as you retain; you perhaps may have kept what I have dropped. The lines for which I am at a loss are something of *rerum civilium sive naturalium*". It was a sorry trick to lose it; help me if you can. I am, SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"June 22, 1776.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"The gout grows better, but slowly."

It was, I think, after I had left London in this year, that this Epitaph gave occasion to a *Remon-*

These words must have been in the other copy. They are not in that which was preferred.

strance to the Monarch of Literature, for an account of which I am indebted to Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo.

That my readers may have the subject more fully and clearly before them, I shall first insert the Epitaph.

“ OLIVARIi GOLDSMITH,  
Poeta, Physici, Historici,  
Qui nullam ferè scribendi genus  
Non tetigit,  
Nullam quod tetigit non ornavit:  
Sive risus essent morandi,  
Sive lacryma,  
Affectuum potens at lenis dominator:  
Ingenio sublimis, viridus, versatilis,  
Oratione grandis, nitidus, remissus:  
Hoc monumento memoriam coluit  
Sodalium amor,  
Amicorum fides,  
Lectorum veneratio.  
Natus in Hiberniâ Fornia Longfordiensis,  
In loco cui nomen Pallas,  
Nov. XXIX. MDCCXXXI;  
Ebblana literis institutus:  
Obiit Londini,  
April. IV, MDCCCLXXIV.”

Sir William Forbes writes to me thus: “I enclose the *Round Robin*. This *jeu d’esprit* took its rise one day at dinner at our friend Sir Joshua Reynolds’s. All the company present, except myself, were friends and acquaintance of Dr. Goldsmith. The Epitaph, written for him by Dr. Johnson, became the subject of conversation, and various emendations were suggested, which it was agreed should be submitted to the Doctor’s consideration.—But the question was, who should have the courage to propose them to him? At last it was hinted, that there could be no way so good as that of a *Round Robin*, as the sailors call it, which they make use of when they enter into a conspiracy, so as not to let it be known who puts his name first or last to the paper. This

proposition was instantly assented to; and Dr. Barnard, Dean of Derry, now Bishop of Killaloe<sup>1</sup>, drew up an address to Dr. Johnson on the occasion, replete with wit and humour, but which it was feared the Doctor might think treated the subject with too much levity. Mr. Burke then proposed the address as it stands in the paper in writing, to which I had the honour to officiate as clerk.

“Sir Joshua agreed to carry it to Dr. Johnson, who received it with much good humour<sup>2</sup>, and

<sup>1</sup> [This prelate, who was afterwards translated to the See of Limerick, died at Wimbledon in Surrey, June 7, 1800, in his eightieth year. The original *Round Robin* remained in his possession; the paper which Sir William Forbes transmitted to Mr. Boswell being only a copy. M.]

<sup>2</sup> He however, upon seeing Dr. Warton's name to the suggestion that the Epitaph should be in English, observed to Sir Joshua, “I wonder that Joe Warton, a scholar by profession, should be such a fool.” He said too, “I should have thought Mund Burke would have had more sense.” Mr. Langton, who was one of the company at Sir Joshua's, like a sturdy scholar, resolutely refused to sign the *Round Robin*. The Epitaph is engraved upon Dr. Goldsmith's monument without any alteration. At another time, when somebody endeavoured to argue in favour of its being in English, Johnson said, “The language of the country of which a learned man was a native is not the language fit for his epitaph; which should be in ancient and permanent language. Consider, sir, how you should feel were you to find at Rotterdam an epitaph upon Erasmus in *Dutch*!”—For my own part, I think it would be best to have Epitaphs written both in a learned language and in the language of the country, so that they might have the advantage of being more universally understood, and at the same time be secured of classical stability. I cannot, however, but be of opinion, that it is not sufficiently discriminative. Applying to Goldsmith equally the epithets of “*Poeta, Historici, Physici*,” is surely not right; for as to his claim to the last of those epithets, I have heard Johnson himself say, “Goldsmith, sir, will give us a very fine book upon the subject; but if he can distinguish a cow from a horse, that, I believe, may be the extent of his knowledge of natural history.” His book is indeed an excellent performance, though in some instances he appears to have trusted too much to Buffon, who, with all his theoretical ingenuity and extraordinary eloquence, I suspect had little actual information in the science on which he wrote so admirably. For instance, he tells us that the cow sheds her horns every two years; a most palpable error, which Goldsmith has faithfully transferred into his book. It is wonderful that Buffon, who lived so much in the country, at his noble seat, should have fallen into such a blunder. I suppose he has confounded the cow with the deer.

desired Sir Joshua to tell the gentlemen that he would alter the Epitaph in any manner they pleased as to the sense of it; but *he would never consent to disgrace the walls of Westminster Abbey with an English inscription.*

“I consider this *Round Robin* as a species of literary curiosity worth preserving, as it marks, in a certain degree, Dr. Johnson’s character.”

My readers are presented with a faithful transcript of a paper which I doubt not of their being desirous to see.

Sir William Forbes’s observation is very just. The anecdote now related proves, in the strongest manner, the reverence and awe with which Johnson was regarded by some of the most eminent men of his time, in various departments, and even by such of them as lived most with him; while it also confirms what I have again and again inculcated, that he was by no means of that ferocious and irascible character which has been ignorantly imagined.

This hasty composition is also to be remarked as one of the thousand instances which evince the extraordinary promptitude of Mr. Burke; who, while he is equal to the greatest things, can adorn the least; can, with equal facility, embrace the vast and complicated speculations of politics, or the ingenious topicks of literary investigation<sup>3</sup>.

#### DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. BOSWELL.

“MADAM,

“You must not think me uncivil in omitting to answer the letter with which you favoured me some time ago. I imagined it to have been writ-

<sup>3</sup> Beside this Latin Epitaph, Johnson honoured the memory of his friend Goldsmith with a short one in Greek. See vol. ii. p. 284.

ten without Mr. Boswell's knowledge, and therefore supposed the answer to require, what I could not find, a private conveyance.

"The difference with Lord Auchinleck is now over; and since young Alexander has appeared I hope no more difficulties will arise among you; for I sincerely wish you all happy. Do not teach the young ones to dislike me, as you dislike me yourself; but let me at least have Veronica's kindness, because she is my acquaintance.

"You will now have Mr. Boswell home; it is well that you have him; he has led a wild life. I have taken him to Lichfield, and he has followed Mr. Thrale to Bath. Pray take care of him, and tame him. The only thing in which I have the honour to agree with you is in loving him; and while we are so much of a mind in a matter of so much importance, our other quarrels will, I hope, produce no great bitterness.

"I am, MADAM,

"Your most humble servant,

"May 10, 1776."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

#### MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

"Edinburgh, June 25, 1776.

"You have formerly complained that my letters were too long. There is no danger of that complaint being made at present; for I find it difficult for me to write to you at all. [Here an account of having been afflicted with a return of melancholy or bad spirits.]

"The boxes of books<sup>4</sup> which you sent to me are arrived; but I have not yet examined the contents.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>4</sup> Upon a settlement of our account of expenses on a Tour to the Hebrides, there was a balance due to me, which Dr. Johnson chose to discharge by sending books.

“I send you Mr. Maclanrin’s paper for the negro, who claims his freedom in the Court of Session.”

DR. JOHNSON TO MR. BOSWELL.

“DEAR SIR,

“THESE black fits, of which you complain, perhaps hurt your memory as well as your imagination. When did I complain that your letters were too long? Your last letter, after a very long delay, brought very bad news. [Here a series of reflections upon melancholy, and—what I could not help thinking strangely unreasonable in him who had suffered so much from it himself,—a good deal of severity and reproof, as if it were owing to my own fault, or that I was, perhaps, affecting it from a desire of distinction.]

“Read Cheyne’s ‘English Malady;’ but do not let him teach you a foolish notion that melancholy is a proof of acuteness. \* \* \* \* \*

“To hear that you have not opened your boxes of books is very offensive. The examination and arrangement of so many volumes might have afforded you an amusement very seasonable at present, and useful for the whole of life. I am, I confess, very angry that you manage yourself so ill. \* \* \* \* \*

“I do not now say any more than that I am, with great kindness and sincerity, DEAR SIR,

“Your humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“July 2, 1776.”

“It was last year determined by Lord Mansfield, in the court of King’s Bench, that a negro cannot be taken out of the kingdom without his own consent.”

<sup>s</sup> Baretti told me that Johnson complained of my writing very long letters to him when I was upon the continent: which was most certainly true; but it seems my friend did not remember it.

## DR. JOHNSON TO MR. BOSWELL.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I MAKE haste to write again, lest my last letter should give you too much pain. If you are really oppressed with overpowering and involuntary melancholy, you are to be pitied rather than reproached. \* \* \* \*

“ Now, my dear Boszy, let us have done with quarrels and with censure. Let me know whether I have not sent you a pretty library. There are, perhaps, many books among them which you never need read through; but there are none which it is not proper for you to know, and sometimes to consult. Of these books, of which the use is only occasional, it is often sufficient to know the contents, that when any question arises, you may know where to look for information.

“ Since I wrote, I have looked over Mr. Mac-laurin's plea; and think it excellent. How is the suit carried on? If by subscription, I commission you to contribute, in my name, what is proper. Let nothing be wanting in such a case. Dr. Drummond<sup>6</sup>, I see, is superseded. His father would have grieved; but he lived to obtain the pleasure of his son's election, and died before that pleasure was abated.

“ Langton's lady has brought him a girl, and both are well; I dined with him the other day.  
\* \* \* \*

“ It vexes me to tell you that on the evening of the 29th of May I was seized by the gout, and

<sup>6</sup> The son of Johnson's old friend, Mr. William Drummond.—(See vol. ii. p. 41).—He was a young man of such distinguished merit that he was nominated to one of the medical professorships in the College of Edinburgh, without solicitation, while he was at Naples. Having other views he did not accept of the honour, and soon afterwards died.



am not quite well. The pain has not been violent, but the weakness and tenderness were very troublesome, and what is said to be very uncommon, it has not alleviated my other disorders.—Make use of youth and health while you have them: make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell.

“I am, MY DEAR SIR,

“Your most affectionate,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“July 16, 1776.”

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

“MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, July 18, 1776.”

“Your letter of the second of this month was rather a harsh medicine; but I was delighted with that spontaneous tenderness, which, a few days afterwards, sent forth such balsam as your next brought me. I found myself for some time so ill that all I could do was to preserve a decent appearance, while all within was weakness and distress. Like a reduced garrison that has some spirit left, I hung out flags, and planted all the force I could muster upon the walls. I am now much better, and I sincerely thank you for your kind attention and friendly counsel.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Count Manucci” came here last week from travelling in Ireland. I have shown him what civilities I could on his own account, on yours, and on that of Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. He has had a fall from his horse, and been much hurt. I regret this unlucky accident, for he seems to be a very amiable man.”

As the evidence of what I have mentioned at

<sup>7</sup> A Florentine nobleman, mentioned by Johnson in his “Notes of his Tour in France.” I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with him in London, in the spring of this year.

the beginning of this year, I select from his private register the following passage:

“July 25, 1776. O God, who hast ordained that whatever is to be desired should be sought by labour, and who, by thy blessing, bringest honest labour to good effect, look with mercy upon my studies and endeavours. Grant me, O Lord, to design only what is lawful and right; and afford me calmness of mind and steadiness of purpose, that I may so do thy will in this short life as to obtain happiness in the world to come, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. Amen.”

It appears from a note subjoined that this was composed when he “purposed to apply vigorously to study, particularly of the Greek and Italian tongues.”

Such a purpose, so expressed, at the age of sixty-seven, is admirable and encouraging; and it must impress all the thinking part of my readers with a consolatory confidence in habitual devotion, when they see a man of such enlarged intellectual powers as Johnson, thus in the genuine earnestness of secrecy imploring the aid of that Supreme Being “from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift.”

“TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

“SIR,

“A young man, whose name is Paterson, offers himself this evening to the Academy. He is the son of a man for whom I have long had a kindness, and who is now abroad in distress. I shall be glad that you will be pleased to show him any

<sup>1</sup> Prayers and Meditations, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> [Samuel Paterson, formerly a bookseller, latterly an auctioneer, and well known for his skill in forming catalogues of books. He died in London, October 29, 1802. M.]

little countenance, or pay him any small distinction. How much it is in your power to favour or to forward a young man I do not know; nor do I know how much this candidate deserves favour by his personal merit, or what hopes his proficiency may now give of future eminence. I recommend him as the son of my friend. Your character and station enable you to give a young man great encouragement by very easy means. You have heard of a man who asked no other favour of Sir Robert Walpole than that he would bow to him at his levee.

"I am, sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"August 3, 1776."

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

"Edinburgh, Aug. 30, 1776.

[After giving him an account of my having examined the chests of books which he had sent to me, and which contained what may be truly called a numerous and miscellaneous *Stall Library*, thrown together at random:—]

"Lord Hailes was against the decree in the case of my client, the minister; not that he justified the minister, but because the parishioner both provoked and retorted. I sent his Lordship your able argument upon the case for his perusal. His observation upon it in a letter to me was, 'Dr. Johnson's *Suasorium* is pleasantly'

\* Why his Lordship uses the epithet *pleasantly*, when speaking of a grave piece of reasoning, I cannot conceive. But different men have different notions of pleasantry. I happened to sit by a gentleman one evening at the Opera House in London, who at the moment when *Medea* appeared to be in great agony at the thought of killing her children, turned to me with a smile, and said, "funny enough."

and artfully composed. I suspect, however, that he has not convinced himself; for I believe that he is better read in ecclesiastical history than to imagine that a Bishop or a Presbyter has a right to begin censure or discipline *à cathedra* <sup>2</sup>.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ For the honour of Count Manucci, as well as to observe that exactness of truth which you have taught me, I must correct what I said in a former letter. He did not fall from his horse, which might have been an imputation on his skill as an officer of cavalry; his horse fell with him.

“ I have, since I saw you, read every word of ‘ Granger’s Biographical History.’ It has entertained me exceedingly, and I do not think him the *Whig* that you supposed. Horace Walpole’s being his patron is, indeed, no good sign of his political principles. But he denied to Lord Mountstuart that he was a Whig, and said he had been accused by both parties of partiality. It seems he was like Pope,

‘ While Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory.’

I wish you would look more into his book; and as Lord Mountstuart wishes much to find a proper person to continue the work upon Granger’s plan, and has desired I would mention it to you; if such a man occurs, please to let me know.— His Lordship will give him generous encouragement.”

“ TO MR. ROBERT LEVETT.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ HAVING spent about six weeks at this place, we have at length resolved upon returning. I

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Johnson afterwards told me that he was of opinion that a clergyman had this right.

expect to see you all in Fleet Street on the 30th of this month.

“ I did not go into the sea till last Friday, but think to go most of this week, though I know not that it does me any good. My nights are very restless and tiresome, but I am otherwise well.

“ I have written word of my coming to Mrs. Williams. Remember me kindly to Francis and Betsy<sup>3</sup>.

“ I am, SIR,

“ Your humble servant,

“ SAM. JOHNSON<sup>4</sup>.”

“ Brighthelmstone, Oct. 21, 1776.”

I again wrote to Dr. Johnson on the 21st of October; informing him that my father had, in the most liberal manner, paid a large debt for me, and that I had now the happiness of being upon very good terms with him; to which he returned the following answer.

“ TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I HAD great pleasure in hearing that you are at last on good terms with your father. Cultivate his kindness by all honest and manly means. Life is but short; no time can be afforded but for the indulgence of real sorrow, or contests upon questions seriously momentous. Let us not throw away any of our days upon useless

<sup>3</sup> [His female servant. M.]

<sup>4</sup> For this and Dr. Johnson's other letters to Mr. Levett, I am indebted to my old acquaintance, Mr. Nathaniel Thomas, whose worth and ingenuity have been long known to a respectable though not a wide circle; and whose collection of medals would do credit to persons of greater opulence.

[Mr. Nathaniel Thomas, who was many years Editor of the St. James's Chronicle, died March 1, 1795. M.]

resentment, or contend who shall hold out longest in stubborn malignity. It is best not to be angry; and best, in the next place, to be quickly reconciled. May you and your father pass the remainder of your time in reciprocal benevolence!

\* \* \* \* \*

“Do you ever hear from Mr. Langton? I visit him sometimes, but he does not talk. I do not like his scheme of life; but as I am not permitted to understand it, I cannot set any thing right that is wrong. His children are sweet babies.

“I hope my irreconcilable enemy, Mrs. Boswell, is well. Desire her not to transmit her malevolence to the young people. Let me have Alexander and Veronica and Euphemia for my friends.

“Mrs. Williams, whom you may reckon as one of your well wishers, is in a feeble and languishing state, with little hopes of growing better. She went for some part of the autumn into the country, but is little benefited; and Dr. Lawrence confesses that his art is at an end. Death is, however, at a distance: and what more than that can we say of ourselves? I am sorry for her pain, and more sorry for her decay. Mr. Levett is sound, wind and limb.

“I was some weeks this autumn at Bright-helmstone. The place was very dull, and I was not well; the expedition to the Hebrides was the most pleasant journey that I ever made.—Such an effort annually would give the world a little diversification.

“Ever year, however, we cannot wander, and must therefore endeavour to spend our time at home as well as we can. I believe it is best to throw life into a method, that every hour may bring its employment, and every employment

have its hour. Xenophon observes, in his 'Treatise of Œconomy,' that if every thing be kept in a certain place, when any thing is worn out or consumed, the vacuity which it leaves will show what is wanting; so if every part of time has its duty, the hour will call into remembrance its proper engagement.

"I have not practised all this prudence myself, but I have suffered much for want of it; and I would have you, by timely recollection and steady resolution, escape from those evils which have lain heavy upon me.

"I am, MY DEAREST BOSWELL,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Bolt Court, Nov. 16, 1776."

On the 16th of November I informed him that Mr. Strahan had sent me *twelve* copies of the "Journey to the Western Islands," handsomely bound, instead of the *twenty* copies which were stipulated; but which, I supposed, were to be only in sheets; requested to know how they should be distributed: and mentioned that I had another son born to me, who was named David, and was a sickly infant.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"I HAVE been for some time ill of a cold, which, perhaps, I made an excuse to myself for not writing, when in reality I knew not what to say.

"The books you must at last distribute as you think best, in my name or your own, as you are inclined, or as you judge most proper. Every body cannot be obliged; but I wish that nobody may be offended. Do the best you can.

“ I congratulate you on the increase of your family, and hope that little David is by this time well, and his mamma perfectly recovered. I am much pleased to hear of the reestablishment of kindness between you and your father. Cultivate his paternal tenderness as much as you can. To live at variance at all is uncomfortable; and variance with a father is still more uncomfortable. Besides that, in the whole dispute, you have the wrong side; at least you gave the first provocations, and some of them very offensive. Let it now be all over. As you have no reason to think that your new mother has shown you any foul play, treat her with respect, and with some degree of confidence; this will secure your father. When once a discordant family has felt the pleasure of peace they will not willingly lose it. If Mrs. Boswell would but be friends with me, we might now shut the temple of Janus.

“ What came of Dr. Memis's cause? Is the question about the negro determined? Has Sir Allan any reasonable hopes? What is become of poor Macquarry? Let me know the event of all these litigations. I wish particularly well to the negro and Sir Allan.

“ Mrs. Williams has been much out of order; and though she is something better, is likely, in her physician's opinion, to endure her malady for life, though she may, perhaps, die of some other. Mrs. Thrale is big, and fancies that she carries a boy; if it were very reasonable to wish much about it, I should wish her not to be disappointed. The desire of male heirs is not appendant only to feudal tenures. A son is almost necessary to the continuance of Thrale's fortune; for what can misses do with a brewhouse? Lands are fitter for daughters than trades.

“ Baretti went away from Thrale's in some



whimsical fit of disgust or ill nature; without taking any leave. It is well if he finds in any other place as good an habitation, and as many conveniences. He has got five and twenty guineas by translating Sir Joshua's Discourses into Italian, and Mr. Thrale gave him a hundred in the spring; so that he is yet in no difficulties.

"Colman has bought Foote's patent, and is to allow Foote for life sixteen hundred pounds a year, as Reynolds told me, and to allow him to play so often on such terms that he may gain four hundred pounds more. What Colman can get by this bargain<sup>s</sup>, but trouble and hazard, I do not see.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your humble servant,

"Dec. 21, 1776."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

The Reverend Dr. Hugh Blair, who had long been admired as a preacher at Edinburgh, thought now of diffusing his excellent sermons more extensively, and increasing his reputation by publishing a collection of them. He transmitted the manuscript to Mr. Strahan, the printer, who after keeping it for some time, wrote a letter to him discouraging the publication. Such at first was the unpropitious state of one of the most successful theological books that has ever appeared. Mr. Strahan, however, had sent one of the sermons to Dr. Johnson for his opinion; and after his unfavourable letter to Dr. Blair had been sent off, he received from Johnson, on Christmas eve, a note in which was the following paragraph:

"I have read over Dr. Blair's first sermon with

<sup>s</sup> [It turned out, however, a very fortunate bargain; for Foote, though not then fifty-six, died at an inn in Dover, in less than a year, Oct. 21, 1777. M.]

more than approbation; to say it is good is to say too little."

I believe Mr. Strahan had very soon after this time a conversation with Dr. Johnson concerning them; and then he very candidly wrote again to Dr. Blair, enclosing Johnson's note, and agreeing to purchasé the volume, for which he and Mr. Cadell gave one hundred pounds. The sale was so rapid and extensive, and the approbation of the publick so high, that, to their honour be it recorded, the proprietors made Dr. Blair a present first of one sum, and afterwards of another, of fifty pounds, thus voluntarily doubling the stipulated price; and when he prepared another volume they gave him at once three hundred pounds, being in all five hundred pounds, by an agreement to which I am a subscribing witness; and now for a third octavo volume he has received no less than six hundred pounds.

In 1777, it appears from his "Prayers and Meditations" that Johnson suffered much from a state of mind "unsettled and perplexed," and from that constitutional gloom, which, together with his extreme humility and anxiety with regard to his religious state, made him contemplate himself through too dark and unfavourable a medium. It may be said of him, that he "saw God in clouds.".. Certain we may be of his injustice to himself in the following lamentable paragraph, which it is painful to think came from the contrite heart of this great man, to whose labours the world is so much indebted: "When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body, and disturbances of the mind, very near to madness, which I hope He that made me will suffer to ex-

tenuate many faults, and excuse many deficiencies<sup>6</sup>." But we find his devotions in this year eminently fervent; and we are comforted by observing intervals of quiet, composure, and gladness.

On Easter day we find the following emphatick prayer: "Almighty and most merciful Father, who seest all our iniseries, and knowest all our necessities, look down upon me, and pity me. Defend me from the violent incursion of evil thoughts, and enable me to form and keep such resolutions as may conduce to the discharge of the duties which thy providence shall appoint me; and so help me, by thy Holy Spirit, that my heart may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, and that I may serve thee with pure affection and a cheerful mind. Have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy upon me; years and infirmities oppress me, terrour and anxiety beset me. Have mercy upon me, my Creator and my Judge. In all perplexities relieve and free me; and so help me by thy Holy Spirit, that I may now so commemorate the death of thy Son our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, as that when this short and painful life shall have an end, I may, for his sake, be received to everlasting happiness. Amen<sup>7</sup>."

While he was at church, the agreeable impressions upon his mind are thus commemorated: "I was for some time distressed, but at last obtained, I hope from the God of Peace, more quiet than I have enjoyed for a long time. I had made no resolution, but as my heart grew lighter, my hopes revived, and my courage increased; and I wrote with my pencil in my Common Prayer Book,

<sup>6</sup> Prayers and Meditations, p. 155.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 153.

*Vita ordinanda.  
Biblia legenda.  
Theologica opera danda.  
Serviendum et lætandum.*

Mr. Steevens, whose generosity is well known, joined Dr. Johnson in kind assistance to a female relation of Dr. Goldsmith, and desired that on her return to Ireland she would procure authentick particulars of the life of her celebrated relation. Concerning her is the following letter:

“TO GEORGE STEEVENS, ESQ.

“DEAR SIR,

“You will be glad to hear that from Mrs. Goldsmith, whom we lamented as drowned, I have received a letter full of gratitude to us all, with promise to make the inquiries which we recommended to her.

“I would have had the honour of conveying this intelligence to Miss Caulfield, but that her letter is not at hand, and I know not the direction. You will tell the good news. I am, SIR,

“Your most, &c.

“February 26, 1777.”

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

“MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, Feb. 14, 1777.

“My state of epistolary accounts with you at present is extraordinary. The balance, as to number, is on your side. I am indebted to you for two letters; one dated the 16th of November, upon which very day I wrote to you, so that our letters were exactly exchanged, and one dated the 21st of December last.

“My heart was warmed with gratitude by the truly kind contents of both of them; and it is

amazing and vexing that I have allowed so much time to elapse without writing to you. But delay is inherent in me, by nature or by bad habit. I waited till I should have an opportunity of paying my compliments on a new year. I have procrastinated till the year is no longer new.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Dr. Memis’s cause was determined against him, with 40l. costs. The Lord President and two other of the Judges dissented from the majority, upon this ground: that although there may have been no intention to injure him by calling him *Doctor of Medicine*, instead of *Physician*, yet, as he remonstrated against the designation before the charter was printed off, and represented that it was disagreeable, and even hurtful to him, it was ill natured to refuse to alter it, and let him have the designation to which he was certainly entitled. My own opinion is, that our court has judged wrong. The defendants were *in mala fide*, to persist in naming him in a way that he disliked. You remember poor Goldsmith, when he grew important, and wished to appear *Doctor Major*, could not bear your calling him *Goldy*. Would it not have been wrong to have named him so in your ‘Preface to Shakspeare,’ or in any serious permanent writing of any sort? The difficulty is, whether an action should be allowed on such petty wrongs. *De minimis non curat lex*.

“The negro cause is not yet decided. A memorial is preparing on the side of slavery. I shall send you a copy as soon as it is printed. Mac-laurin is made happy by your approbation of his memorial for the black.

“Macquarry was here in the winter, and we passed an evening together. The sale of his estate cannot be prevented.

"Sir Allan Maclean's suit against the Duke of Argyle, for recovering the ancient inheritance of his family, is now fairly before all our judges. I spoke for him yesterday, and Maclaurin to-day; Crosbie spoke to-day against him. Three more counsel are to be heard, and next week the cause will be determined. I send you the *Informations*, or *Cases*, on each side, which I hope you will read. You said to me when we were under Sir Allan's hospitable roof, 'I will help him with my pen.' You said it with a generous glow; and though his Grace of Argyle did afterwards mount you upon an excellent horse, upon which 'you looked like a Bishop,' you must not swerve from your purpose at Inchkenneth. I wish you may understand the points at issue, amidst our Scotch law principles and phrases.

[Here followed a full state of the case, in which I endeavoured to make it as clear as I could to an Englishman who had no knowledge of the formularies and technical language of the law of Scotland.]

"I shall inform you how the cause is decided here. But as it may be brought under the review of our Judges, and is certainly to be carried by appeal to the House of Lords, the assistance of such a mind as yours will be of consequence. Your paper on *Vicious Intromission* is a noble proof of what you can do even in Scotch law.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I have not yet distributed all your books. Lord Hailes and Lord Monboddo have each received one, and return you thanks. Monboddo dined with me lately, and having drunk tea, we were a good while by ourselves, and as I knew that he had read the 'Journey' superficially, as he did not talk of it as I wished, I brought it to him and read aloud several passages; and then

he talked so that I told him he was to have a copy *from the authour*. He begged *that* might be marked on it.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I ever am, MY DEAR SIR,

"Your most faithful

"And affectionate humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

SIR ALEXANDER DICK TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"SIR,

Prestonfield, Feb. 17, 1777.

"I HAD yesterday the honour of receiving your book of your '*Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*,' which you were so good as to send me by the hands of our mutual friend, Mr. Boswell, of Auchinleck; for which I return you my most hearty thanks; and after carefully reading it over again, shall deposit it in my little collection of choice books, next our worthy friend's '*Journey to Corsica*.' As there are many things to admire in both performances, I have often wished that no *Travels* or *Journeys* should be published but those undertaken by persons of integrity and capacity, to judge well, and describe faithfully and in good language the situation, condition, and manners of the countries passed through. Indeed our country of Scotland, in spite of the union of the crowns, is still in most places so devoid of clothing, or cover from hedges and plantations, that it was well you gave your readers a sound *monitoire* with respect to that circumstance. The truths you have told, and the purity of the language in which they are expressed, as your '*Journey*' is universally read, may, and already appear to have a very good effect. For a man of my acquaintance, who has the largest nursery for trees and hedges in this country, tells me, that of

late the demand upon him for these articles is doubled, and sometimes tripled. I have, therefore, listed Dr. Samuel Johnson in some of my memorandums of the principal planters and favourers of the enclosures, under a name which I took the liberty to invent from the Greek, *Papa-dendrion*. Lord Auchinleck and some few more are of the list. I am told that one gentleman in the shire of Aberdeen, viz. Sir Archibald Grant, has planted above fifty millions of trees on a piece of very wild ground at Monimusk: I must inquire if he has fenced them well, before he enters my list; for that is the soul of enclosing. I began myself to plant a little, our ground being too valuable for much, and that is now fifty years ago; and the trees, now in my seventy-fourth year, I look up to with reverence, and show them to my eldest son now in his fifteenth year, and they are full the height of my country house here, where I had the pleasure of receiving you, and hope again to have that satisfaction with our mutual friend, Mr. Boswell. I shall always continue, with the truest esteem, DEAR DOCTOR,

"Your much obliged,

"And obedient humble servant,

"ALEXANDER DICK."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"It is so long since I heard any thing from you, that I am not easy about it; write something to me next post. When you sent your last letter, every thing seemed to be mending; I hope nothing

<sup>8</sup> For a character of this very amiable man, see "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides," 3d edit. p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> By the then course of the post, my long letter of the 14th had not yet reached him.



has lately grown worse. I suppose young Alexander continues to thrive, and Verónica is now very pretty company. I do not suppose the lady is yet reconciled to me, yet let her know that I love her very well, and value her very much.

"Dr. Blair is printing some sermons. If they are all like the first, which I have read, they are *sermões aurei, ac auro magis aurei*. It is excellently written both as to doctrine and language. Mr. Watson's book seems to be much esteemed.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Poor Beauclerk still continues very ill. Langton lives on as he used to do. His children are very pretty, and, I think, his lady loses her Scotch. Paolo I never see.

"I have been so distressed by difficulty of breathing that I lost, as was computed, six-and-thirty ounces of blood in a few days. I am better, but not well.

"I wish you would be vigilant and get me Graham's 'Telemachus' that was printed at Glasgow, a very little book; and 'Johnstoni Poemata,' another little book, printed at Middleburgh.

"Mrs. Williams sends her compliments, and promises that when you come hither, she will accommodate you as well as ever she can in the old room. She wishes to know whether you sent her book to Sir Alexander Gordon.

"My dear Boswell, do not neglect to write to me; for your kindness is one of the pleasures of my life, which I should be sorry to lose.

"I am, SIR,

"Your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"February 18, 1777."

“ TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

“ DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, Feb. 24, 1777.

“ YOUR letter dated the 18th instant, I had the pleasure to receive last post. Although my late long neglect, or rather delay, was truly culpable, I am tempted not to regret it, since it has produced me so valuable a proof of your regard. I did, indeed, during that inexcusable silence, sometimes divert the reproaches of my own mind, by fancying that I should hear again from you, inquiring with some anxiety about me, because, for aught you knew, I might have been ill.

“ You are pleased to show me, that my kindness is of some consequence to you. My heart is elated at the thought. Be assured, my dear sir, that my affection and reverence for you are exalted and steady. I do not believe that a more perfect attachment ever existed in the history of mankind. And it is a noble attachment; for the attractions are Genius, Learning, and Piety.

“ Your difficulty of breathing alarms me, and brings into my imagination an event which, although in the natural course of things I must expect at some period, I cannot view with composure.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ My wife is much honoured by what you say of her. She begs you may accept of her best compliments. She is to send you some marmalade of oranges of her own making.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ I ever am, MY DEAR SIR,

“ Your most obliged

“ And faithful humble servant,

“ JAMES BOSWELL.”

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"I HAVE been much pleased with your late letter, and am glad that my old enemy, Mrs. Boswell, begins to feel some remorse. As to Miss Veronica's Scotch, I think it cannot be helped. An English maid you might easily have; but she would still imitate the greater number; as they would be likewise those whom she must most respect. Her dialect will not be gross. Her mamma has not much Scotch, and you have yourself very little. I hope she knows my name, and does not call me *Johnston*<sup>2</sup>.

"The immediate cause of my writing is this:—One Shaw, who seems a modest and a decent man, has written an Erse Grammar, which a very learned Highlander, Macbean, has, at my request, examined and approved.

"The book is very little, but Mr. Shaw has been persuaded by his friends to set it at half a guinea, though I advised only a crown, and thought myself liberal. You, whom the authour considers as a great encourager of ingenious men, will receive a parcel of his proposals and receipts. I have undertaken to give you notice of them, and to solicit your countenance. You must ask no poor man, because the price is really too high. Yet such a work deserves patronage.

"It is proposed to augment our club from twenty to thirty, of which I am glad; for as we have several in it whom I do not much like to consort with<sup>3</sup>, I am for reducing it to a mere mis-

<sup>2</sup> *Johnson* is the most common English formation of the surname from *John*; *Johnston* the Scotch. My illustrious friend observed that many North Britons pronounced his name in their own way.

<sup>3</sup> On account of their differing from him as to religion and politics.

cellaneous collection of conspicuous men, without any determinate character. \* \* \* \*

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Most affectionately yours,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"March 14, 1777."

"My respects to Madam, to Veronica, to Alexander, to Euphemia, to David."

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

"Edinburgh, April 4, 1777."

[After informing him of the death of my little son David, and that I could not come to London this spring:—]

"I think it hard that I should be a whole year without seeing you. May I presume to petition for a meeting with you in the autumn? You have, I believe, seen all the cathedrals in England, except that of Carlisle. If you are to be with Dr. Taylor, at Ashbourne, it would not be a great journey to come thither. We may pass a few most agreeable days there by ourselves, and I will accompany you a good part of the way to the southward again. Pray think of this.

"You forget that Mr. Shaw's *Erse Grammar* was put into your hands by myself last year: Lord Eglintoune put it into mine. I am glad that Mr. Macbean approves of it. I have received Mr. Shaw's proposals for its publication, which I can perceive are written *by the hand of a Master*.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Pray get for me all the editions of '*Walton's Lives*.' I have a notion that the republication of them with *Notes* will fall upon me, between Dr. Horne and Lord Hailes."

\* [None of the persons here mentioned executed the work which they had in contemplation. Walton's valuable book, however, has been correctly republished in quarto, with notes and illustrations, by the Rev. Mr. Zouch. M.]

Mr. Shaw's proposals† for “An Analysis of the Scotch Celtic Language,” were thus illuminated by the pen of Johnson:

“THOUGH the Erse Dialect of the Celtic Language has, from the earliest times, been spoken in Britain, and still subsists in the northern parts and adjacent islands; yet, by the negligence of a people rather warlike than lettered, it has hitherto been left to the caprice and judgment of every speaker, and has floated in the living voice, without the steadiness of analogy, or direction of rules. An Erse Grammar is an addition to the stores of literature; and its author hopes for the indulgence always shown to those that attempt to do what was never done before. If his work shall be found defective, it is at least all his own: he is not like other grammarians, a compiler or transcriber; what he delivers he has learned by attentive observation among his countrymen, who perhaps will be themselves surprised to see that speech reduced to principles, which they have used only by imitation.

“The use of this book will, however, not be confined to the mountains and islands; it will afford a pleasing and important subject of speculation to those whose studies lead them to trace the affinity of languages, and the migrations of the ancient races of mankind.”

“TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

Glasgow, April 24, 1777.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“OUR worthy friend Thrale's death having appeared in the newspapers, and been afterwards contradicted, I have been placed in a state of very uneasy uncertainty, from which I hoped to be relieved by you: but my hopes have as yet been

vain. How could you omit to write to me on such an occasion? I shall wait with anxiety.

"I am going to Auchinleck to stay a fortnight with my father. It is better not to be there very long at one time. But frequent renewals of attention are agreeable to him.

"Pray tell me about this edition of 'The English Poets, with a Preface, biographical and critical, to each Authour, by Samuel Johnson, LL.D.' which I see advertised. I am delighted with the prospect of it. Indeed I am happy to feel that I am capable of being so much delighted with literature. But is not the charm of this publication chiefly owing to the *magnum nomen* in the front of it?

"What do you say of Lord Chesterfield's Memoirs and last Letters?

"My wife has made marmalade of oranges for you. I left her and my daughters and Alexander all well yesterday. I have taught Veronica to speak of you thus;—Dr. Johnson, not Johnston. I remain, MY DEAR SIR,

"Your most affectionate,

"And obliged humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"THE story of Mr. Thrale's death, as he had neither been sick nor in any other danger, made so little impression upon me that I never thought about obviating its effects on any body else. It is supposed to have been produced by the English custom of making April fools, that is, of sending one another on some foolish errand on the first of April.

"Tell Mrs. Boswell that I shall taste her mar-

malade cautiously at first. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. Beware, says the Italian proverb, of a reconciled enemy. But when I find it does me no harm, I shall then receive it and be thankful for it, as a pledge of firm and, I hope, of unalterable kindness. She is, after all, a dear, dear lady.

"Please to return Dr. Blair thanks for his sermons. The Scotch write English wonderfully well:

\* \* \* \* \*

"Your frequent visits to Auchinleck and your short stay there are very laudable and very judicious. Your present concord with your father gives me great pleasure; it was all that you seemed to want.

"My health is very bad, and my nights are very unquiet. What can I do to mend them? I have for this summer nothing better in prospect than a journey into Staffordshire and Derbyshire, perhaps with Oxford and Birmingham in my way.

"Make my compliments to Miss Veronica; I must leave it to *her* philosophy to comfort you for the loss of little David. You must remember, that to keep three out of four is more than your share. Mrs. Thrale has but four out of eleven.

"I am engaged to write little Lives, and little Prefaces, to a little edition of the English Poets. I think I have persuaded the booksellers to insert something of Thomson; and if you could give me some information about him, for the life which we have is very scanty, I should be glad.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"May 3, 1777."

To those who delight in tracing the progress of works of literature, it will be an entertainment to compare the limited design with the ample execution of that admirable performance, "The Lives of the English Poets," which is the richest, most beautiful, and indeed most perfect production of Johnson's pen. His notion of it at this time appears in the preceding letter. He has a memorandum in this year, "29 May, Easter Eve, I treated with booksellers on a bargain, but the time was not long." The bargain was concerning that undertaking; but his tender conscience seems alarmed, lest it should have intruded too much on his devout preparation for the solemnity of the ensuing day. But, indeed, very little time was necessary for Johnson's concluding a treaty with the booksellers; as he had, I believe, less attention to profit from his labours than any man to whom literature has been a profession. I shall here insert from a letter to me from my late worthy friend Mr. Edward Dilly, though of a later date, an account of this plan so happily conceived; since it was the occasion of procuring for us an elegant collection of the best biography and criticism of which our language can boast.

" TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" DEAR SIR,

Southhill, Sept. 26, 1777.

" You will find by this letter that I am still in the same calm retreat, from the noise and bustle of London, as when I wrote to you last. I am happy to find you had such an agreeable meeting with your old friend Dr. Johnson; I have no doubt your stock is much increased by the inter-



view; few men, nay, I may say, scarcely any man has got that fund of knowledge and entertainment as Dr. Johnson in conversation. When he opens freely, every one is attentive to what he says; and cannot fail of improvement as well as pleasure.

“The edition of the Poets, now printing, will do honour to the English press; and a concise account of the life of each authour, by Dr. Johnson, will be a very valuable addition, and stamp the reputation of this edition superiour to any thing that is gone before. The first cause that gave rise to this undertaking, I believe, was owing to the little trifling edition of the Poets, printing by the Martins at Edinburgh, and to be sold by Bell, in London. Upon examining the volumes which were printed, the type was found so extremely small that many persons could not read them; not only this inconvenience attended it, but the inaccuracy of the press was very conspicuous. These reasons, as well as the idea of an invasion of what we call our Literary Property, induced the London Booksellers to print an elegant and accurate edition of all the English Poets of reputation, from Chaucer to the present time.

“Accordingly a select number of the most respectable booksellers met on the occasion; and, on consulting together, agreed, that all the proprietors of copyright in the various Poets should be summoned together; and when their opinions were given, to proceed immediately on the business. Accordingly a meeting was held, consisting of about forty of the most respectable booksellers of London, when it was agreed that an elegant and uniform edition of ‘The English Poets’ should be immediately printed, with a concise account of the life of each authour, by Dr.

Samuel Johnson; and that three persons should be deputed to wait upon Dr. Johnson, to solicit him to undertake the Lives, viz. T. Davies, Strahan, and Cadell. The Doctor very politely undertook it, and seemed exceedingly pleased with the proposal. As to the terms, it was left entirely to the Doctor to name his own: he mentioned two hundred guineas<sup>6</sup>; it was immediately agreed to; and a farther compliment, I believe, will be made him. A committee was likewise appointed to engage the best engravers, viz. Bartolozzi, Sherwin, Hall, &c. Likewise another committee for giving directions about the paper, printing, &c. so that the whole will be conducted with spirit, and in the best manner, with respect to authorship, editorship, engravings, &c. &c. My brother will give you a list of the Poets we mean to give, many of which are within the time of the Act of Queen Anne, which Martin and Bell cannot give, as they have no property in them; the proprietors are almost all the booksellers in London of consequence.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Ever yours,

"EDWARD DILLY."

I shall afterwards have occasion to consider the extensive and varied range which Johnson took, when he was once led upon ground which he trod with a peculiar delight, having long been intimately acquainted with all the circumstances of it that could interest and please.

<sup>6</sup> [Johnson's moderation in demanding so small a sum is extraordinary. Had he asked one thousand, or even fifteen hundred guineas, the booksellers, who knew the value of his name, would doubtless have readily given it. They have probably got five thousand guineas by this work in the course of twenty-five years. M.]



about it, therefore, if you can: do what you can easily do without anxious exactness. Lay the foundation; and leave the superstructure to posterity. I am, SIR,

"Your humble servant;

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"May 19, 1777."

Early in this year came out, in two volumes quarto, the posthumous works of the learned Dr. Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester; being "A Commentary, with Notes, on the four Evangelists and the Acts of the Apostles," with other theological pieces. Johnson had now an opportunity of making a grateful return to that excellent prelate, who, we have seen, was the only person who gave him any assistance in the compilation of his dictionary. The Bishop had left some account of his life and character, written by himself. To this Johnson made some valuable additions,† and also furnished to the editor, the Reverend Mr. Derby, a Dedication,† which I shall here insert, both because it will appear at this time with peculiar propriety; and because it will tend to propagate and increase that "fervour of *Loyalty*" which in me, who boast of the name of Tory, is not only a principle, but a passion.

"TO THE KING.

"SIR,

"I PRESUME to lay before your Majesty the last labours of a learned Bishop, who died in the toils and duties of his calling. He is now beyond the reach of all earthly honours and rewards; and only the hope of inciting others to imitate him makes it now fit to be remembered, that he enjoyed in his life the favour of your Majesty.

"The tumultuary life of Princes seldom per-

mits them to survey the wide extent of national interest without losing sight of private merit; to exhibit qualities which may be imitated by the highest and the humblest of mankind; and to be at once amiable and great.

"Such characters, if now and then they appear in history, are contemplated with admiration. May it be the ambition of all your subjects to make haste with their tribute of reverence; and as posterity may learn from your Majesty how Kings should live, may they learn likewise from your people how they should be honoured.

"I am,

"May it please your Majesty,

"With the most profound respect,

"Your Majesty's,

"Most dutiful and devoted

"Subject and Servant."

In the summer he wrote a Prologue,\* which was spoken before "A Word to the Wise," a comedy by Mr. Hugh Kelly, which had been brought upon the stage in 1770; but he being a writer for ministry in one of the newspapers, it fell a sacrifice to popular fury, and, in the playhouse phrase, was *damned*. By the generosity of Mr. Harris, the proprietor of Covent Garden Theatre, it was now exhibited for one night, for the benefit of the authour's widow and children. To conciliate the favour of the audience was the intention of Johnson's Prologue, which, as it is not long, I shall here insert, as a proof that his poetical talents were in no degree impaired.

"This night presents a play, which publick rage,  
Of right or wrong, once hooted from the stage:  
From zeal or malice now no more we dread,  
For English vengeance wars not with the dead.  
A generous foe regards with pitying eye  
The man whom Fate has laid where all must lie.

To wit, reviving from its author's dust,  
 Be kind, ye judges, or at least be just;  
 Let no renew'd hostilities invade  
 The oblivious grave's inviolable shade.  
 Let one great payment every claim appease,  
 And him who cannot hurt, allow to please;  
 To please by scenes, unconscious of offence,  
 By harmless merriment or useful sense.  
 Where aught of bright or fair the piece displays,  
 Approve it only;—'tis too late to praise.  
 If want of skill or want of care appear,  
 Forbear to hiss;—the poet cannot hear.  
 By all, like him, must praise and blame be found,  
 At last, a fleeting gleam or empty sound;  
 Yet then shall calm reflection bless the night,  
 When liberal pity dignified delight;  
 When pleasure fired her torch at virtue's flame,  
 And mirth was bounty with an humbler name."

A circumstance which could not fail to be very pleasing to Johnson occurred this year. The tragedy of "Sir Thomas Overbury," written by his early companion in London, Richard Savage, was brought up with alterations at Drury Lane Theatre. The Prologue to it was written by Mr. Richard Brinsley Sheridan; in which, after describing very pathetically the wretchedness of

"Ill fated Savage, at whose birth was given  
 No parent but the Muse, no friend but Heaven:"

he introduced an elegant compliment to Johnson on his Dictionary, that wonderful performance which cannot be too often or too highly praised; of which Mr. Harris, in his "Philological Inquiries," justly and liberally observes, "Such is its merit that our language does not possess a more copious, learned, and valuable work." The concluding lines of this Prologue were these:

"So pleads the tale<sup>a</sup> that gives to future times  
 The son's misfortunes and the parent's crimes;  
 There shall his name (if own'd to-night) survive,  
 Fix'd by THE HAND THAT BIDS OUR LANGUAGE LIVE."

<sup>a</sup> Part First, chap. iv.

<sup>b</sup> "Life of Richard Savage by Dr. Johnson."

Mr. Sheridan here at once did honour to his taste and to his liberality of sentiment, by showing that he was not prejudiced from the unlucky difference which had taken place between his worthy father and Dr. Johnson. I have already mentioned that Johnson was very desirous of reconciliation with old Mr. Sheridan. It will, therefore, not seem at all surprising that he was zealous in acknowledging the brilliant merit of his son. While it had as yet been displayed only in the drama, Johnson proposed him as a member of the Literary Club, observing, that "He who has written the two best comedies of his age is surely a considerable man." And he had, accordingly, the honour to be elected; for an honour it undoubtedly must be allowed to be, when it is considered of whom that society consists, and that a single black ball excludes a candidate.

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

July 9, 1777.

"FOR the health of my wife and children I have taken the little country house at which you visited my uncle, Dr. Boswell, who, having lost his wife, is gone to live with his son. We took possession of our villa about a week ago; we have a garden of three quarters of an acre, well stocked with fruit trees and flowers, and gooseberries and currants, and peas and beans, and cabbages, &c. &c. and my children are quite happy. I now write to you in a little study, from the window of which I see around me a verdant grove, and beyond it the lofty mountain called Arthur's Seat.

"Your last letter, in which you desire me to send you some additional information concerning Thomson, reached me very fortunately just as I

was going to Lanark, to put my wife's two nephews, the young Campbells, to school there, under the care of Mr. Thomson, the master of it, whose wife is sister to the authour of 'The Seasons.' She is an old woman; but her memory is very good; and she will with pleasure give me for you every particular that you wish to know, and she can tell. Pray then take the trouble to send me such questions as may lead to biographical materials. You say that the Life which we have of Thomson is scanty. Since I received your letter, I have read his Life, published under the name of Cibber, but as you told me, really written by a Mr. Shiels<sup>1</sup>; that written by Dr. Murdoch; one prefixed to an edition of the 'Seasons,' published at Edinburgh, which is compounded of both, with the addition of an anecdote of Quin's relieving Thomson from prison; the abridgment of Murdoch's account of him, in the 'Biographia Britannica,' and another abridgment of it in the 'Biographical Dictionary,' enriched with Dr. Joseph Warton's critical panegyrick on the 'Seasons' in his 'Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope:' from all these it appears to me that we have a pretty full account of this poet. However, you will, I doubt not, show me many blanks, and I shall do what can be done to have them filled up. As Thomson never returned to Scotland (which *you* will think very wise), his sister can speak from her own knowledge only as to the early part of his life. She has some letters from him, which may probably give light as to his more advanced progress, if she will let us see them, which I suppose she will. I believe George Lewis Scott<sup>2</sup> and Dr. Armstrong

<sup>1</sup> See p. 30, 31, of this volume.

<sup>2</sup> [George Lewis Scott, Esq. F.R.S., an amiable and learned man, formerly Sub-preceptor to his present Majesty, and afterwards appointed a Commissioner of Excise. He died in 1780. M.]



are now his only surviving companions, while he lived in and about London; and they, I dare say, can tell more of him than is yet known. My own notion is, that Thomson was a much coarser man than his friends are willing to acknowledge. His 'Seasons' are indeed full of elegant and pious sentiments; but a rank soil, nay a dunghill, will produce beautiful flowers.

"Your edition' of the 'English Poets' will be very valuable on account of the 'Prefaces and Lives.' But I have seen a specimen of an edition of the Poets at the Apollo press, at Edinburgh, which, for excellence in printing and engraving, highly deserves a liberal encouragement.

"Most sincerely do I regret the bad health and bad rest with which you have been afflicted; and I hope you are better. I cannot believe that the prologue which you generously gave to Mr. Kelly's widow and children the other day is the effusion of one in sickness and in disquietude: but external circumstances are never sure indications of the state of man. I send you a letter which I wrote to you two years ago at Wilton; and did not send it at the time, for fear of being reprov'd as indulging too much tenderness; and one written to you at the tomb of Melancthon, which I kept back, lest I should appear at once too superstitious and too enthusiastick. I now imagine that perhaps they may please you.

"You do not take the least notice of my pro-

<sup>3</sup> [Dr. Johnson was not the editor of this Collection of the English Poets; he merely furnished the biographical prefaces with which it is enriched; as is rightly stated in a subsequent page.

He indeed, from a virtuous motive, recommended the works of four or five poets (whom he has named) to be added to the collection; but he is no otherwise answerable for any which are found there, or any which are omitted.—The poems of Goldsmith (whose life I know he intended to write, for I collected some materials for it by his desire), were omitted, in consequence of a petty exclusive interest in some of them, vested in Mr. Carnan, a bookseller. *AL.*]

posal for our meeting at Carlisle<sup>4</sup>. Though I have meritoriously refrained from visiting London this year, I ask you if it would not be wrong that I should be two years without having the benefit of your conversation, when, if you come down as far as Derbyshire, we may meet at the expense of a few days journeying, and not many pounds. I wish you to see Carlisle, which made me mention that place. But if you have not a desire to complete your tour of the English cathedrals, I will take a larger share of the road between this place and Ashbourne. So tell me *where* you will fix for our passing a few days by ourselves. Now don't cry 'foolish fellow,' or 'idle dog.' Chain your humour, and let your kindness play.

"You will rejoice to hear that Miss Macleod, of Rasay, is married to Colonel Mure Campbell, an excellent man, with a pretty good estate of his own, and the prospect of having the Earl of Loudoun's fortune and honours. Is not this a noble lot for our fair Hebridean? How happy am I that she is to be in Ayrshire. We shall have the Laird of Rasay, and old Malcolm, and I know not how many gallant Macleods, and bagpipes; &c. &c. at Auchinleck. Perhaps you may meet them all there.

"Without doubt you have read what is called

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Johnson had himself talked of our seeing Carlisle together. *High* was a favourite word of his to denote a person of rank. He said to me, "Sir, I believe we may meet at the house of a Roman Catholic lady in Cumberland; a high lady, sir." I afterwards discovered that he meant Mrs. Strickland, sister of Charles Townley, Esq. whose very noble collection of statues and pictures is not more to be admired than his extraordinary and polite readiness in showing it, which I and several of my friends have agreeably experienced. They who are possessed of valuable stores of gratification to persons of taste should exercise their benevolence in imparting the pleasure. Grateful acknowledgments are due to Welbore Ellis Agar, Esq. for the liberal access which he is pleased to allow to his exquisite collection of pictures.

'The *Life* of David Hume,' written by himself, with the letter from Dr. Adam Smith subjoined to it. Is not this an age of daring effrontery? My friend Mr. Anderson, Professor of Natural Philosophy at Glasgow, at whose house you and I supped, and to whose care Mr. Windham, of Norfolk, was entrusted at that University, paid me a visit lately; and after we had talked with indignation and contempt of the poisonous productions with which this age is infested; he said there was now an excellent opportunity for Dr. Johnson to step forth. I agreed with him that you might knock Hume's and Smith's heads together, and make vain and ostentatious infidelity exceedingly ridiculous. Would it not be worth your while to crush such noxious weeds in the moral garden?

"You have said nothing to me of Dr. Dodd. I know not how you think on that subject; though the newspapers give us a saying of yours in favour of mercy to him. But I own I am very desirous that the royal prerogative of remission of punishment should be employed to exhibit an illustrious instance of the regard which GOD'S VICEGERENT will ever show to piety and virtue. If for ten righteous men the ALMIGHTY would have spared Sodom, shall not a thousand acts of goodness done by Dr. Dodd counterbalance one crime? Such an instance would do more to encourage goodness than his execution would do to deter from vice. I am not afraid of any bad consequence to society; for who will persevere for a long course of years in a distinguished discharge of religious duties, with a view to commit a forgery with impunity?

"Pray make my best compliments acceptable to Mr. and Mrs. Thrall, by assuring them of my hearty joy that the *Master*, as you call him, is

alive. I hope I shall often taste his Champagne—*soberly*.

“I have not heard from Langton for a long time. I suppose he is as usual,

‘Studious the busy moments to deceive.’

\* \* \* \* \*

“I remain, MY DEAR SIR,

“Your most affectionate

“And faithful humble servant,

“JAMES BOSWELL.”

On the 23d of June, I again wrote to Dr. Johnson, enclosing a ship-master's receipt for a jar of orange marmalade, and a large packet of Lord Hailes's "Annals of Scotland."

“TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

“DEAR SIR,

“I HAVE just received your packet from Mr. Thrale's, but have not daylight enough to look much into it. I am glad that I have credit enough with Lord Hailes to be trusted with more copy. I hope to take more care of it than of the last. I return Mrs. Boswell my affectionate thanks for her present, which I value as a token of reconciliation.

“Poor Dodd was put to death yesterday, in opposition to the recommendation of the jury—the petition of the city of London,—and a subsequent petition signed by three-and-twenty thousand hands. Surely the voice of the publick; when it calls so loudly, and calls only for mercy, ought to be heard.

“The saying that was given me in the papers I never spoke; but I wrote many of his petitions;

and some of his letters. He applied to me very often. He was, I am afraid, long flattered with hopes of life; but I had no part in the dreadful delusion; for as soon as the King had signed his sentence, I obtained from Mr. Chamier an account of the disposition of the court towards him, with a declaration that there *was no hope even of a respite*. This letter immediately was laid before Dodd; but he believed those whom he wished to be right, as it is thought, till within three days of his end. He died with pious composure and resolution. I have just seen the Ordinary that attended him. His address to his fellow convicts offended the Methodists; but he had a Moravian with him much of his time. His moral character is very bad: I hope all is not true that is charged upon him. Of his behaviour in prison an account will be published.

"I give you joy of your country house and your pretty garden; and hope some time to see you in your felicity. I was much pleased with your two letters that had been kept so long in store<sup>b</sup>; and rejoice at Miss Rasay's advancement, and wish Sir Allan success.

<sup>b</sup> Since they have been so much honoured by Dr. Johnson, I shall here insert them.

" TO MR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

" MY EVER DEAR AND MUCH RESPECTED SIR,  
 " You know my solemn enthusiasm of mind. You love me for it, and I respect myself for it, because in so far I resemble Mr. Johnson. You will be agreeably surprised when you learn the reason of my writing this letter. I am at Wittemberg in Saxony. I am in the old church where the Reformation was first preached, and where some of the reformers lie interred. I cannot resist the serious pleasure of writing to Mr. Johnson from the tomb of Melancthon. My paper rests upon the gravestone of that great and good man, who was undoubtedly the worthiest of all the reformers. He wished to reform abuses which had been introduced into the Church; but had no private resentment to gratify. So mild was he, that when his aged mother consulted him with anxiety on the perplexing disputes of the times, he advised her 'to keep to the old religion.' At this tomb, then, my ever dear and respected friend! I vow to thee an eternal attach-

"I hope to meet you somewhere towards the north, but am loath to come quite to Carlisle. Can we not meet at Manchester? But we will settle it in some other letters.

"Mr. Seward, a great favourite at Streatham, has been, I think, enkindled by our travels with a curiosity to see the Highlands. I have given him letters to you and Beattie. He desires that a lodging may be taken for him at Edinburgh, against his arrival. He is just setting out.

mont. It shall be my study to do what I can to render your life happy; and if you die before me, I shall endeavour to do honour to your memory; and, elevated by the remembrance of you, persist in noble piety. May God, the father of all beings, ever bless you! and may you continue to love

"Your most affectionate friend and devoted servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

"Sunday, September 30, 1764."

"TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Wilton House, April 22, 1776.

"EVERY scene of my life confirms the truth of what you have told me, 'there is no certain happiness in this state of being.'—I am here, amidst all that you know is at Lord Pembroke's; and yet I am weary and gloomy. I am just setting out for the house of an old friend in Devonshire, and shall not get back to London for a week yet. You said to me last Good Friday, with a cordiality that warmed my heart, that if I came to settle in London we should have a day fixed every week to meet by ourselves and talk freely. To be thought worthy of such a privilege cannot but exalt me. During my present absence from you, while, notwithstanding the gaiety which you allow me to possess, I am darkened by temporary clouds, I beg to have a few lines from you; a few lines merely of kindness, as a *vaticum* till I see you again. In your 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' and in Parnell's 'Contentment,' I find the only sure means of enjoying happiness; or, at least, the hopes of happiness. I ever am, with reverence and affection,

"Most faithfully yours,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

<sup>6</sup> William Seward, Esq. F.R.S. editor of "Anecdotes of some distinguished Persons," &c. in four volumes, 8vo. well known to a numerous and valuable acquaintance for his literature, love of the fine arts, and social virtues. I am indebted to him for several communications concerning Johnson.

[This gentleman, who was born in 1747, and was educated at the Charter House, and at Oxford, died in London, April 24, 1790. M.]

“Langton has been exercising the militia. Mrs. Williams is, I fear, declining. Dr. Lawrence says he can do no more. She is gone to summer in the country, with as many conveniences about her as she can expect; but I have no great hope. We must all die: may we all be prepared!

“I suppose Miss Boswell reads her book, and young Alexander takes to his learning. Let me hear about them; for every thing that belongs to you belongs, in a more remote degree, and not, I hope, very remote, to, DEAR SIR,

“Yours affectionately,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“June 28, 1777.”

TO THE SAME.

“DEAR SIR,

“THIS gentleman is a great favourite at Streat-ham, and therefore you will easily believe that he has very valuable qualities. Our narrative has kindled him with a desire of visiting the Highlands, after having already seen a great part of Europe. You must receive him as a friend, and when you have directed him to the curiosities of Edinburgh, give him instructions and recommendations for the rest of his journey. I am,

“DEAR SIR,

“Your most humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“June 24, 1777.”

Johnson's benevolence to the unfortunate was, I am confident, as steady and active as that of any of those who have been most eminently distinguished for that virtue. Innumerable proofs of it I have no doubt will be for ever concealed from mortal eyes. We may, however, form some judgment of it, from the many and very various

instances which have been discovered. One, which happened in the course of this summer, is remarkable from the name and connexion of the person who was the object of it. The circumstance to which I allude is ascertained by two letters, one to Mr. Langton, and another to the Reverend Dr. Vyse, rector of Lambeth, son of the respectable clergyman at Lichfield, who was contemporary with Johnson, and in whose father's family Johnson had the happiness of being kindly received in his early years.

DR. JOHNSON TO BENNET LANGTON, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"I HAVE lately been much disordered by a difficulty of breathing, but am now better. I hope your house is well.

"You know we have been talking lately of St. Cross, at Winchester; I have an old acquaintance whose distress makes him very desirous of an hospital, and I am afraid I have not strength enough to get him into the Chartreux. He is a painter, who never rose higher than to get his immediate living, and from that, at eighty-three, he is disabled by a slight stroke of the palsy, such as does not make him at all helpless on common occasions, though his hand is not steady enough for his art.

"My request is, that you will try to obtain a promise of the next vacancy from the Bishop of Chester. It is not a great thing to ask, and I hope we shall obtain it. Dr. Warton has promised to favour him with his notice, and I hope he may end his days in peace. I am, SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"June 29, 1777."



"TO THE REVEREND DR. VYSE, AT LAMBETH.

"SIR,

"I DOUBT not but you will readily forgive me for taking the liberty of requesting your assistance in recommending an old friend to his Grace the Archbishop as Governor of the Charter House.

"His name is De Groot; he was born at Gloucester; I have known him many years. He has all the common claims to charity, being old, poor, and infirm in a great degree. He has likewise another claim, to which no scholar can refuse attention; he is by several descents the nephew of Hugo Grotius; of him from whom perhaps every man of learning has learnt something. Let it not be said that in any lettered country a nephew of Grotius asked a charity and was refused.

"I am, REVEREND SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"July 9, 1777."

["TO THE REVEREND DR. VYSE, AT LAMBETH.

"If any notice should be taken of the recommendation which I took the liberty of sending you, it will be necessary to know that Mr. De Groot is to be found at No. 8, in Pye Street, Westminster. This information, when I wrote, I could not give you; and being going soon to Lichfield, think it necessary to be left behind me.

"More I will not say. You will want no persuasion to succour the nephew of Grotius.

"I am, SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."]

"July 22, 1777."

THE REVEREND DR. VYSE TO MR. BOSWELL.

"SIR,

Lambeth, June 9, 1787.

"I HAVE searched in vain for the letter which I spoke of, and which I wished, at your desire, to communicate to you. It was from Dr. Johnson, to return me thanks for my application to Archbishop Cornwallis in favour of poor De Groot. He rejoices at the success it met with, and is lavish in the praise he bestows upon his favourite, Hugo Grotius. I am really sorry that I cannot find this letter, as it is worthy of the writer. That which I send you enclosed<sup>7</sup> is at your service. It is very short, and will not perhaps be thought of any consequence, unless you should judge proper to consider it as a proof of the very humane part which Dr. Johnson took in behalf of a distressed and deserving person. I am, SIR,

"Your most obedient humble servant,

"W. VYSE."

DR. JOHNSON TO MR. EDWARD DILLY.

"SIR,

"To the collection of English Poets I have recommended the volume of Dr. Watts to be added; his name has long been held by me in veneration, and I would not willingly be reduced to tell of him only that he was born and died. Yet of his life I know very little, and therefore must pass him in a manner very unworthy of his cha-

<sup>7</sup> The preceding letter.

<sup>8</sup> [Dr. Vyse, at my request, was so obliging as once more to endeavour to recover the letter of Johnson to which he alludes, but without success; for, April 23, 1800, he wrote to me thus: "I have again searched, but in vain, for one of his letters, in which he speaks in his own nervous style of Hugo Grotius.—De Groot was clearly a descendant of the family of Grotius, and Archbishop Cornwallis willingly complied with Dr. Johnson's request." M.]

racter, unless some of his friends will favour me with the necessary information; many of them must be known to you; and by your influence perhaps I may obtain some instruction: my plan does not exact much; but I wish to distinguish Watts, a man who never wrote but for a good purpose. Be pleased to do for me what you can.

"I am, SIR,

"Your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Bolt Court, Fleet Street,  
July 7, 1777."

"TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, July 15, 1777.

"THE fate of poor Dr. Dodd made a dismal impression upon my mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I had sagacity enough to divine that you wrote his speech to the Recorder before sentence was pronounced. I am glad you have written so much for him; and I hope to be favoured with an exact list of the several pieces when we meet.

"I received Mr. Seward as the friend of Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and as a gentleman recommended by Dr. Johnson to my attention. I have introduced him to Lord Kames, Lord Monboddo, and Mr. Nairne. He is gone to the Highlands with Dr. Gregory; when he returns I shall do more for him.

"Sir Allan Maclean has carried that branch of his cause of which we had good hopes: the President and one other Judge only were against him. I wish the house of Lords may do as well as the Court of Session has done. But Sir Allan has not the lands of *Brolos* quite cleared by this judgment till a long account is made up of debts and

interests on the one side, and rents on the other. I am, however, not much afraid of the balance...

"Macquarry's estates, Staffa and all, were sold yesterday, and bought by a Campbell. I fear he will have little or nothing left out of the purchase money.

"I send you the case against the negro, by Mr. Cullen, son to Dr. Cullen, in opposition to Mac-laurin's for liberty, of which you have approved. Pray read this, and tell me what you think as a *Politician*, as well as a *Poet*, upon the subject.

"Be so kind as to let me know how your time is to be distributed next autumn. I will meet you at Manchester, or where you please; but I wish you would complete your tour of the cathedrals, and come to Carlisle, and I will accompany you a part of the way homewards. I am ever,

"Most faithfully yours,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"Your notion of the necessity of a yearly interview is very pleasing to both my vanity and tenderness. I shall, perhaps, come to Carlisle another year; but my money has not held out so well as it used to do. I shall go to Ashbourne, and I purpose to make Dr. Taylor invite you. If you live awhile with me at his house, we shall have much time to ourselves, and our stay will be no expense to us or him. I shall leave London the 28th; and, after some stay at Oxford and Lichfield, shall probably come to Ashbourne about the end of your Session; but of all this you shall have notice. Be satisfied we will meet somewhere.

"What passed between me and poor Dr. Dodd, you shall know more fully when we meet.

“Of law suits there is no end; poor Sir Allan must have another trial, for which, however, his antagonist cannot be much blamed, having two Judges on his side. I am more afraid of the debts than of the House of Lords. It is scarcely to be imagined to what debts will swell that are daily increasing by small additions, and how carelessly in a state of desperation debts are contracted. Poor Macquarry was far from thinking that when he sold his islands he should receive nothing. For what were they sold? And what was their yearly value? The admission of money into the Highlands will soon put an end to the feudal modes of life, by making those men landlords who were not chiefs. I do not know that the people will suffer by the change; but there was in the patriarchal authority something venerable and pleasing. Every eye must look with pain on a *Campbell* turning the *Macquarries* at will out of their *sedes avitæ*, their hereditary island.

“Sir Alexander Dick is the only Scotsman liberal enough not to be angry that I could not find trees where trees were not. I was much delighted by his kind letter.

“I remember Rasay with too much pleasure not to partake of the happiness of any part of that amiable family. Our ramble in the islands hangs upon my imagination; I can hardly help imagining that we shall go again. Pennant seems to have seen a great deal which we did not see: when we travel again, let us look better about us.

“You have done right in taking your uncle's house. Some change in the form of life gives from time to time a new epocha of existence. In a new place there is something new to be done; and a different system of thoughts rises in the mind. I wish I could gather currants in your .

garden. Now fit up a little study, and have your books ready at hand; do not spare a little money to make your habitation pleasing to yourself.

"I have dined lately with poor dear——. I do not think he goes on well. His table is rather coarse, and he has his children too much about him". But he is a very good man.

"Mrs. Williams is in the country, to try if she can improve her health; she is very ill. Matters have come so about that she is in the country with very good accommodation; but age and sickness and pride have made her so peevish that I was forced to bribe the maid to stay with her by a secret stipulation of half a crown a week over her wages.

"Our Club ended its session about six weeks ago. We now only meet to dine once a fortnight. Mr. Dunning, the great lawyer, is one of our members. The Thrales are well.

"I long to know how the Negro's cause will be decided. What is the opinion of Lord Auchinleck, or Lord Hailes, or Lord Monboddo.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most affectionate, &c.

"July 22, 1777."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. BOSWELL.

"MADAM,

"THOUGH I am well enough pleased with the taste of sweetmeats, very little of the pleasure which I received at the arrival of your jar of mar-

<sup>B</sup> This very just remark I hope will be constantly held in remembrance by parents, who are in general too apt to indulge their own fond feelings for their children at the expense of their friends. The common custom of introducing them after dinner is highly injudicious. It is agreeable enough that they should appear at any other time; but they should not be suffered to poison the moments of festivity by attracting the attention of the company, and in a manner compelling them from politeness to say what they do not think.

malade arose from eating it. I received it as a token of friendship, as a proof of reconciliation, things much sweeter than sweetmeats, and upon this consideration I return you, dear madam, my sincerest thanks. By having your kindness I think I have a double security for the continuance of Mr. Boswell's, which it is not to be expected that any man can long keep when the influence of a lady so highly and so justly valued operates against him. Mr. Boswell will tell you that I was always faithful to your interest, and always endeavoured to exalt you in his estimation. You must now do the same for me. We must all help one another, and you must now consider me as,

"DEAR MADAM,

"Your most obliged,

"And most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"July 22, 1777."

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, July 28, 1777.

"THIS is the day on which you were to leave London, and I have been amusing myself in the intervals of my law drudgery with figuring you in the Oxford post-coach. I doubt, however, if you have had so merry a journey as you and I had in that vehicle last year, when you made so much sport with Gwyn, the architect. Incidents upon a journey are recollected with peculiar pleasure; they are preserved in brisk spirits, and come up again in our minds, tinctured with that gaiety, or at least that animation with which we first perceived them."

\* \* \* \* \*

[I added, that something had occurred which I was afraid might prevent me from meeting him;

and that my wife had been affected with complaints which threatened a consumption, but was now better.]

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"Do not disturb yourself about our interviews; I hope we shall have many; nor think it any thing hard or unusual that your design of meeting me is interrupted. We have both endured greater evils, and have greater evils to expect.

"Mrs. Boswell's illness makes a more serious distress. Does the blood rise from her lungs or from her stomach? From little vessels broken in the stomach there is no danger. Blood from the lungs is, I believe, always frothy, as mixed with wind. Your physicians know very well what is to be done. The loss of such a lady would, indeed, be very afflictive, and I hope she is in no danger. Take care to keep her mind as easy as is possible.

"I have left Langton in London. He has been down with the militia, and is again quiet at home, talking to his little people, as, I suppose, you do sometimes. Make my compliments to Miss Veronica<sup>1</sup>. The rest are too young for ceremony.

"I cannot but hope that you have taken your country house at a very seasonable time, and that it may conduce to restore or establish Mrs. Boswell's health, as well as provide room and exercise for the young ones. That you and your lady may both be happy, and long enjoy your happiness, is the sincere and earnest wish of,

DEAR SIR,

"Your most, &c.

"Oxford, Aug. 4, 1777."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

<sup>1</sup> [This young lady, the author's eldest daughter, and at this time about five years old, died in London, of a consumption, four months after her father, Sept. 26, 1795. M.]



MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

[Informing him that my wife had continued to grow better, so that my alarming apprehensions were relieved: and that I hoped to disengage myself from the other embarrassment which had occurred, and therefore requesting to know particularly when he intended to be at Ashbourne.]

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"I AM this day come to Ashbourne, and have only to tell you that Dr. Taylor says you shall be welcome to him, and you know how welcome you will be to me. Make haste to let me know when you may be expected.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, and tell her I hope we shall be at variance no more.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Aug. 30, 1777."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"ON Saturday I wrote a very short letter, immediately upon my arrival hither, to show you that I am not less desirous of the interview than yourself. Life admits not of delays; when pleasure can be had, it is fit to catch it: every hour takes away part of the things that please us, and perhaps part of our disposition to be pleased. When I came to Lichfield, I found my old friend Harry Jackson dead. It was a loss, and a loss not to be repaired, as he was one of the companions of my childhood. I hope we may long continue to

gain friends; but the friends which merit or usefulness can procure us are not able to supply the place of old acquaintance, with whom the days of youth may be retraced, and those images revived which gave the earliest delight. If you and I live to be much older, we shall take great delight in talking over the Hebridean Journey.

“In the mean time it may not be amiss to contrive some other little adventure, but what it can be I know not; leave it, as Sydney says,

‘To virtue, fortune, time, and woman’s breast’;

for I believe Mrs. Boswell must have some part in the consultation.

<sup>2</sup> [By an odd mistake, in the first three editions, we find a reading in this line to which Dr. Johnson would by no means have subscribed; *wine* having been substituted for *time*. That error probably was a mistake in the transcript of Johnson’s original letter, his hand-writing being often very difficult to read. The other deviation in the beginning of the line (*virtus* instead of *nature*) must be attributed to his memory having deceived him; and therefore has not been disturbed.

The verse quoted is the concluding line of a sonnet of Sidney’s, of which the earliest copy, I believe, is found in Harrington’s translation of Ariosto, 1591, in the notes on the eleventh book:—“And therefore,” says he, “that excellent verse of Sir Philip Sidney in his first *ARCADIA*, which I know not by what mishap is left out in the printed booke, [4to. 1590,] is in mine opinion worthie to be praised and followed, to make a good and virtuous wife:

‘Who doth desire that chaste his wife should bee,  
First be he true, for truth doth truth deserve;  
Then be he such, as she his worth may see,  
And, alwaies one, credit with her preserve:  
Not toying kynd, nor causelessly unkynd,  
Not stirring thoughts, nor yet denying right,  
Not spying faults, nor in plaine errors blind,  
Never hard hand, nor over rayns [reins] too light;  
As far from want, as far from vaine expence,  
Th’ one doth enforce, the t’other doth entice:  
Allow good companie, but drive from thence  
All filthie mouths that glorie in their vice:  
This done, thou hast no more but leave the rest  
To *nature*, fortune, *time*, and woman’s breast.’”

I take this opportunity to add, that in ENGLAND’S PARNASSUS, a

"One thing you will like. The Doctor, so far as I can judge, is likely to leave us enough to ourselves. He was out to-day before I came down, and, I fancy, will stay out to dinner. I have brought the papers about poor Dodd, to show you, but you will soon have despatched them."

"Before I came away, I sent poor Mrs. Williams into the country, very ill of a pituitous defluxion, which wastes her gradually away, and which her physician declares himself unable to stop. I supplied her as far as could be desired, with all conveniences to make her excursion and abode pleasant and useful. But I am afraid she can only linger a short time in a morbid state of weakness and pain."

"The Thrales, little and great, are all well, and purpose to go to Brighthelmstone at Michaelmas. They will invite me to go with them, and perhaps I may go, but I hardly think I shall like to stay the whole time; but of futurity we know but little."

"Mrs. Porter is well; but Mrs. Aston, one of the ladies at Stowhill, has been struck with a palsy, from which she is not likely ever to recover. How soon may such a stroke fall upon us!"

"Write to me, and let us know when we may expect you. I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Ashbourne, Sept. 1, 1777."

collection of poetry printed in 1600, the second couplet of this sonnet is thus corruptly exhibited:

"Then ~~he~~ be such as ~~he~~ his words may see,  
And alwaies one credit ~~which~~ her preserve:"

a variation which I the rather mention, because the readings of that book have been triumphantly quoted when they happened to coincide with the sophistications of the second folio edition of Shakspeare's plays in 1632, as adding I know not what degree of authority and authenticity to the latter: as if the corruptions of one book (and that abounding with the grossest falsifications of the authors from whose works its extracts are made) could give any kind of support to another, which in every page is still more adulterated and unfaithful. M.]

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

"Edinburgh, Sept. 9, 1777."

[After informing him that I was to set out next day, in order to meet him at Ashbourne:—]

"I have a present for you from Lord Hailes; the fifth book of 'Lactantius,' which he has published with Latin notes. He is also to give you a few anecdotes for your 'Life of Thomson,' who I find was private tutor to the present Earl of Haddington, Lord Hailes's cousin, a circumstance not mentioned by Dr. Murdoch. I have keen expectations of delight from your edition of the English Poets".

"I am sorry for poor Mrs. Williams's situation. You will, however, have the comfort of reflecting on your kindness to her. Mr. Jackson's death and Mrs. Aston's palsy are gloomy circumstances. Yet surely we should be habituated to the uncertainty of life and health. When my mind is unclouded by melancholy, I consider the temporary distresses of the state of being as "light afflictions," by stretching my mental view into that glorious after-existence, when they will appear to be as nothing. But present pleasures and present pains must be felt. I lately read 'Rasselas' over again with great satisfaction.

"Since you are desirous to hear about Macquarry's sale, I shall inform you particularly. The gentleman who purchased Ulva, is Mr. Campbell, of Auchnaba: our friend Macquarry was proprietor of two-thirds of it, of which the rent was 156*l.* 5*s.* 1*½d.* This parcel was set up at 4,069*l.* 5*s.* 1*d.* but it sold for no less than 5,540*l.* The other third of Ulva, with the island of Staffa, belonged to Macquarry of Ormaig. Its rent, in-

cluding that of Staffa, 83*l.* 12*s.* 2*d.*—set up at 2,178*l.* 10*s.* 4*d.*—sold for no less than 3,540*l.* The Laird of Col wished to purchase Ulva, but he thought the price too high. There may, indeed, be great improvements made there, both in fishing and agriculture; but the interest of the purchase-money exceeds the rent so very much that I doubt if the bargain will be profitable. There is an island called Little Colonsay, of 10*l.* yearly rent, which I am informed has belonged to the Macquarrys of Ulva for many ages, but which was lately claimed by the Presbyterian Synod of Argyll, in consequence of a grant made to them by Queen Anne. It is believed that their claim will be dismissed, and that Little Colonsay will also be sold for the advantage of Macquarry's creditors. What think you of purchasing this island, and endowing a school or college there, the master to be a clergyman of the Church of England? How venerable would such an institution make the name of DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON, in the Hebrides! I have, like yourself, a wonderful pleasure in recollecting our travels in those islands. The pleasure is, I think, greater than it reasonably should be, considering that we had not much either of beauty or elegance to charm our imaginations, or of rude novelty to astonish. Let us, by all means, have another expedition. I shrink a little from our scheme of going up the Baltick<sup>4</sup>. I am sorry you have al-

<sup>4</sup> It appears that Johnson, now in his sixty-eighth year, was seriously inclined to realize the project of our going up the Baltick, which I had started when we were in the Isle of Sky; for he thus writes to Mrs. Thrale; Letters, vol. i. p. 366:—

“Ashbourne, Sept. 13, 1777.

“BOSWELL, I believe, is coming. He talks of being here to-day: I shall be glad to see him: but he shrinks from the Baltick expedition, which, I think, is the best scheme in our power: what we shall substitute I know not. He wants to see Wales; but, except the

ready been in Wales; for I wish to see it. Shall we go to Ireland, of which I have seen but little? We shall try to strike out a plan when we are at Ashbourne. I am ever

“Your most faithful humble servant,

“JAMES BOSWELL.”

“TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

“DEAR SIR,

“I WRITE to be left at Carlisle, as you direct me; but you cannot have it. Your letter, dated Sept. 6, was not at this place till this day, Thursday, Sept. 11; and I hope you will be here before this is at Carlisle”. However, what you have not going, you may have returning; and as I believe I shall not love you less after our interview, it will then be as true as it is now, that I set a very high value upon your friendship, and count your kindness as one of the chief felicities of my life. Do not fancy that an intermission of writing is a decay of kindness. No man is always in a disposition to write; nor has any man at all times something to say.

woods of *Bachynugh*, what is there in Wales that can fill the hunger of ignorance, or quench the thirst of curiosity? We may, perhaps, form some scheme or other: but, in the phrase of *Hockley in the Hole*, it is pity he has not a *better bottom*.”

Such an ardour of mind, and vigour of enterprise, is admirable at any age: but more particularly so at the advanced period at which Johnson was then arrived. I am sorry now that I did not insist on our executing that scheme. Besides the other objects of curiosity and observation, to have seen my illustrious friend received, as he probably would have been, by a prince so eminently distinguished for his variety of talents and acquisitions as the late King of Sweden; and by the Empress of Russia, whose extraordinary abilities, information, and magnanimity astonish the world, would have afforded a noble subject for contemplation and record. This reflection may possibly be thought too visionary by the more sedate and cold blooded part of my readers; yet I own I frequently indulge it with an earnest, unavailing regret.

<sup>5</sup> It so happened. The letter was forwarded to my house at Edinburgh.

"That distrust which intrudes so often on your mind is a mode of melancholy which, if it be the business of a wise man to be happy, it is foolish to indulge; and, if it be a duty to preserve our faculties entire for their proper use, it is criminal. Suspicion is very often a useless pain. From that and all other pains I wish you free and safe; for

"I AM, DEAR SIR,

"Most affectionately yours,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Ashbourne, Sept. 11, 1777."

On Sunday evening, Sept. 14, I arrived at Ashbourne, and drove directly up to Dr. Taylor's door. Dr. Johnson and he appeared before I had got out of the postchaise, and welcomed me cordially.

I told them that I had travelled all the preceding night, and gone to bed at Leek in Staffordshire; and that when I rose to go to church in the afternoon, I was informed there had been an earthquake, of which, it seems, the shock had been felt in some degree at Ashbourne. JOHNSON. "Sir, it will be much exaggerated in popular talk: for, in the first place, the common people do not accurately adapt their thoughts to the objects; nor, secondly, do they accurately adapt their words to their thoughts: they do not mean to lie; but, taking no pains to be exact, they give you very false accounts. A great part of their language is proverbial. If any thing rocks at all, they say *it rocks like a cradle*; and in this way they go on."

The subject of grief for the loss of relations and friends being introduced, I observed that it was strange to consider how soon it in general wears away. Dr. Taylor mentioned a gentleman

of the neighbourhood as the only instance he had ever known of a person who had endeavoured to *retain* grief. He told Dr. Taylor, that after his Lady's death, which affected him deeply, he *resolved* that the grief, which he cherished with a kind of sacred fondness, should be lasting; but that he found he could not keep it long. JOHNSON. "All grief for what cannot in the course of nature be helped soon wears away; in some sooner, indeed, in some later; but it never continues very long, unless where there is madness, such as will make a man have pride so fixed in his mind as to imagine himself a king; or any other passion in an unreasonable way: for all unnecessary grief is unwise, and therefore will not be long retained by a sound mind. If, indeed, the cause of our grief is occasioned by our own misconduct, if grief is mingled with remorse of conscience, it should be lasting." BOSWELL. "But, sir, we do not approve of a man who very soon forgets the loss of a wife or a friend." JOHNSON. "Sir, we disapprove of him, not because he soon forgets his grief, for the sooner it is forgotten the better; but because we suppose that if he forgets his wife or his friend soon, he has not had much affection for them."

I was somewhat disappointed in finding that the edition of the English Poets, for which he was to write Prefaces and Lives, was not an undertaking directed by him: but that he was to furnish a Preface and Life to any poet the book-sellers pleased. I asked him if he would do this to any dunce's works, if they should ask him. JOHNSON. "Yes, sir; and *say* he was a dunce." My friend seemed now not much to relish talking of this edition.

On Monday, September 15, Dr. Johnson observed, that every body commended such parts of



his "Journey to the Western Islands" as were in their own way. "For instance (said he), Mr. Jackson (the all-knowing) told me there was more good sense upon trade in it than he should hear in the House of Commons in a year, except from Burke. Jones commended the part which treats of language; Burke that which describes the inhabitants of mountainous countries."

After breakfast, Johnson carried me to see the garden belonging to the school of Ashbourne, which is very prettily formed upon a bank, rising gradually behind the house. The Reverend Mr. Langley, the head-master, accompanied us.

While we sat basking in the sun upon a seat here, I introduced a common subject of complaint, the very small salaries which many curates have, and I maintained that no man should be invested with the character of a clergyman, unless he has a security for such an income as will enable him to appear respectable; that, therefore, a clergyman should not be allowed to have a curate, unless he gives him a hundred pounds a year; if he cannot do that, let him perform the duty himself. JOHNSON. "To be sure, sir, it is wrong that any clergyman should be without a reasonable income; but as the church revenues were sadly diminished at the Reformation, the clergy who have livings cannot afford, in many instances, to give good salaries to curates, without leaving themselves too little; and, if no curate were to be permitted unless he had a hundred pounds a year, their number would be very small, which would be a disadvantage, as then there would not be such choice in the nursery for the church, curates being candidates for the higher ecclesiastical offices, according to their merit and good behaviour." He explained the system of the English Hierarchy exceedingly

well. "It is not thought fit (said he) to trust a man with the care of a parish till he has given proof as a curate that he shall deserve such a trust." This is an excellent *theory*: and if the *practice* were according to it, the Church of England would be admirable indeed. However, as I have heard Dr. Johnson observe as to the Universities, bad practice does not infer that the *constitution* is bad.

We had with us at dinner several of Dr. Taylor's neighbours, good civil gentleman, who seemed to understand Dr. Johnson very well; and not to consider him in the light that a certain person did, who being struck, or rather stunned by his voice and manner, when he was afterwards asked what he thought of him, answered, "He's a tremendous companion."

Johnson told me that "Taylor was a very sensible acute man, and had a strong mind; that he had great activity in some respects, and yet such a sort of indolence that if you should put a pebble upon his chimneypiece, you would find it there, in the same state, a year afterwards."

And here is a proper place to give an account of Johnson's humane and zealous interference in behalf of the Reverend Dr. William Dodd, formerly Prebendary of Brecon, and chaplain in ordinary to his Majesty; celebrated as a very popular preacher; an encourager of charitable institutions, and authour of a variety of works, chiefly theological. Having unhappily contracted expensive habits of living; partly occasioned by licentiousness of manners, he in an evil hour, when pressed by want of money, and dreading an exposure of his circumstances, forged a bond of which he attempted to avail himself to support his credit, flattering himself with hopes that he might be able to repay its amount without

being detected. The person, whose name he thus rashly and criminally presumed to falsify, was the Earl of Chesterfield, to whom he had been tutor, and who he, perhaps, in the warmth of his feelings, flattered himself would have generously paid the money in case of an alarm being taken, rather than suffer him to fall a victim to the dreadful consequences of violating the law against forgery, the most dangerous crime in a commercial country; but the unfortunate divine had the mortification to find that he was mistaken. His noble pupil appeared against him, and he was capitally convicted.

Johnson told me that Dr. Dodd was very little acquainted with him, having been but once in his company, many years previous to this period (which was precisely the state of my own acquaintance with Dodd); but in his distress he bethought himself of Johnson's persuasive power of writing, if haply it might avail to obtain for him the Royal Mercy. He did not apply to him directly, but, extraordinary as it may seem, through the late Countess of Harrington\*, who wrote a letter to Johnson, asking him to employ his pen in favour of Dodd. Mr. Allen, the printer, who was Johnson's landlord and next neighbour in Bolt Court, and for whom he had much kindness, was one of Dodd's friends, of whom, to the credit of humanity be it recorded, that he had many who did not desert him, even after his infringement of the law had reduced him to the state of a man under sentence of death. Mr. Allen told me that he carried Lady Harrington's letter to Johnson, that Johnson read it walking up and down his chamber, and seemed much agitated, after which he said, "I will do what I

\* [Caroline, eldest daughter of Charles Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton, and wife of William, the second Earl of Harrington. M.]

can ;"—and certainly he did make extraordinary exertions.

He this evening, as he had obligingly promised in one of his letters, put into my hands the whole series of his writings upon this melancholy occasion, and I shall present my readers with the abstract which I made from the collection; in doing which I studied to avoid copying what had appeared in print, and now make part of the edition of "Johnson's Works," published by the Booksellers of London, but taking care to mark Johnson's variations in some of the pieces there exhibited.

Dr. Johnson wrote, in the first place, Dr. Dodd's "Speech to the Recorder of London," at the Old Bailey, when sentence of death was about to be pronounced upon him.

He wrote also "The Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren," a sermon delivered by Dr. Dodd, in the chapel of Newgate. According to Johnson's manuscript it began thus after the text, *What shall I do to be saved?*—"These were the words with which the keeper, to whose custody Paul and Silas were committed by their prosecutors, addressed his prisoners, when he saw them freed from their bonds by the perceptible agency of divine favour, and was, therefore, irresistibly convinced that they were not offenders against the laws, but martyrs to the truth."

Dr. Johnson was so good as to mark for me with his own hand, on a copy of this sermon which is now in my possession, such passages as were added by Dr. Dodd. They are not many: whoever will take the trouble to look at the printed copy, and attend to what I mention, will be satisfied of this.

There is a short introduction by Dr. Dodd,

and he also inserted this sentence, "You see with what confusion and dishonour I now stand before you;—no more in the pulpit of instruction, but on this humble seat with yourselves." The *notes* are entirely Dodd's own, and Johnson's writing ends at the words, "the thief whom he pardoned on the cross." What follows was supplied by Dr. Dodd himself.

The other pieces mentioned by Johnson in the abovementioned collection are two letters, one to the Lord Chancellor Bathurst (not Lord North; as is erroneously supposed), and one to Lord Mansfield;—A Petition from Dr. Dodd to the King;—A Petition from Mrs. Dodd to the Queen;—Observations of some length inserted in the newspapers, on occasion of Earl Percy's having presented to his Majesty a petition for mercy to Dodd, signed by twenty thousand people, but all in vain. He told me that he had also written a petition from the city of London; "but (said he, with a significant smile) they *mended* it."

<sup>7</sup> Having unexpectedly, by the favour of Mr. Stone, of London Field, Hackney, seen the original in Johnson's hand writing, of "The Petition of the City of London to his Majesty, in favour of Dr. Dodd," I now present it to my readers, with such passages as were omitted, inclosed in crotchets, and the additions or variations marked in Italicks.

"That William Dodd, Doctor of Laws, now lying under sentence of death in *your Majesty's gaol of Newgate*, for the crime of forgery, has for a great part of his life set a useful and laudable example of diligence in his calling [and as we have reason to believe, has exercised his ministry with great fidelity and efficacy], *which in many instances has produced the most happy effect.*

"That he has been the first institutor, [or] *and* a very earnest and active promoter of several modes of useful charity, and [that] therefore [he] may be considered as having been on many occasions a benefactor to the publick.

"[That when they consider his past life, they are willing to suppose his late crime to have been not the consequence of habitual depravity, but the suggestion of some sudden and violent temptation.]

"[That] *Your Petitioners* therefore considering his case, as in some of its circumstances unprecedented and peculiar, *and encouraged by*

The last of these articles which Johnson wrote is, "Dr. Dodd's last solemn Declaration," which he left with the sheriff at the place of execution. Here also my friend marked the variations on a copy of that piece now in my possession. Dodd inserted, "I never knew or attended to the calls of frugality, or the needful minuteness of painful economy;" and in the next sentence he introduced the words which I distinguish by *Italicks*; "My life for some *few unhappy* years past has been *dreadfully erroneous*." Johnson's expression was *hypocritical*; but his remark on the margin is, "With this he said he could not charge himself."

Having thus authentically settled what part of the "Occasional Papers," concerning Dr. Dodd's miserable situation, came from the pen of Johnson, I shall proceed to present my readers with my record of the unpublished writings relating to that extraordinary and interesting matter.

I found a letter to Dr. Johnson from Dr. Dodd, May 23, 1777, in which, "The Convict's Address" seems clearly to be meant:

"I am so penetrated, my ever dear sir, with a sense of your extreme benevolence towards me, that I cannot find words equal to the sentiments of my heart. \* \* \* \*

"You are too conversant in the world to need the slightest hint from me, of what infinite utility the Speech<sup>a</sup> on the awful day has been to me. I experience, every hour, some good effect from it. I am sure that effects still more salutary and important must follow from *your kind and intended*

*your Majesty's known clemency*, [they] most humbly recommend the said William Dodd to [his] *your Majesty's* most gracious consideration, in hopes that he will be found not altogether [unfit] *unworthy* to stand an example of Royal Mercy."

<sup>a</sup> His speech at the Old Bailey, when found guilty.

*favour.* I will labour—God being my helper—to do justice to it from the pulpit. I am sure, had I your sentiments constantly to deliver from thence, in all their mighty force and power, not a soul could be left unconvinced and unpersuaded.”

\* \* \* \* \*

.. He added, “May God ALMIGHTY bless and reward, with his choicest comforts, your philanthropick actions, and enable me at all times to express what I feel of the high and uncommon obligations which I owe to the *first man* in our times.”

On Sunday, June 22, he writes, begging Dr. Johnson’s assistance in framing a supplicatory letter to his Majesty :

“If his Majesty could be moved of his royal clemency to spare me and my family the horrors and ignominy of a *publick death*, which the *publick* itself is solicitous to wave, and to grant me in some silent distant corner of the globe to pass the remainder of my days in penitence and prayer, I would bless his clemency and be humbled.”

This letter was brought to Dr. Johnson when in church. He stooped down and read it, and wrote, when he went home, the following letter for Dr. Dodd to the King :

“SIR,

“MAY it not offend your Majesty, that the most miserable of men applies himself to your clemency, as his last hope and his last refuge; that your mercy is most earnestly and humbly implored by a clergyman, whom your Laws and Judges have condemned to the horror and ignominy of a publick execution.

“I confess the crime, and own the enormity of its consequences, and the danger of its example.

Nor have I the confidence to petition for impunity; but humbly hope that publick security may be established, without the spectacle of a clergyman dragged through the streets to a death of infamy, amidst the derision of the profligate and profane; and that justice may be satisfied with irrevocable exile, perpetual disgrace, and hopeless penury.

"My life, sir, has not been useless to mankind. I have benefited many. But my offences against God are numberless, and I have had little time for repentance. Preserve me, sir, by your prerogative of mercy, from the necessity of appearing unprepared at that tribunal, before which Kings and Subjects must stand at last together. Permit me to hide my guilt in some obscure corner of a foreign country, where, if I can ever attain confidence to hope that my prayers will be heard, they shall be poured with all the fervour of gratitude for the life and happiness of your Majesty.

"I am, SIR,

"Your Majesty's, &c."

Subjoined to it was written as follows:

"TO DR. DODD.

"SIR,

"I most seriously enjoin you not to let it be at all known that I have written this letter, and to return the copy to Mr. Allen in a cover to me. I hope I need not tell you that I wish it success.—But do not indulge hope.—Tell nobody."

It happened luckily that Mr. Allen was pitched on to assist in this melancholy office, for he was a great friend of Mr. Akerman, the keeper of Newgate. Dr. Johnson never went to see Dr. Dodd. He said to me, "it would have done *him* more



harm than good to Dodd, who once expressed a desire to see him, but not earnestly."

"Dr. Johnson, on the 20th of June, wrote the following letter:

"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHARLES  
JENKINSON.

"SIR,

"SINCE the conviction and condemnation of Dr. Dodd, I have had, by the intervention of a friend, some intercourse with him, and I am sure I shall lose nothing in your opinion by tenderness and commiseration. Whatever be the crime, it is not easy to have any knowledge of the delinquent, without a wish that his life may be spared; at least when no life has been taken away by him. I will, therefore, take the liberty of suggesting some reasons for which I wish this unhappy being to escape the utmost rigour of his sentence.

"He is, so far as I can recollect, the first clergyman of our church who has suffered public execution for immorality; and I know not whether it would not be more for the interests of religion to bury such an offender in the obscurity of perpetual exile than to expose him in a cart, and on the gallows, to all who for any reason are enemies to the clergy.

"The supreme power has, in all ages, paid some attention to the voice of the people; and that voice does not least deserve to be heard, when it calls out for mercy. There is now a very general desire that Dodd's life should be spared: More is not wished; and, perhaps, this is not too much to be granted.

"If you, sir, have any opportunity of enforcing these reasons, you may, perhaps, think them worthy of consideration: but whatever you deter-

mine; I most respectfully entreat that you will be pleased to pardon for this intrusion,

"SIR,

"Your most obedient

"And most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

It has been confidently circulated, with invidious remarks, that to this letter no attention whatever was paid by Mr. Jenkinson (afterwards Earl of Liverpool); and that he did not even deign to show the common civility of owning the receipt of it. I could not but wonder at such conduct in the noble Lord, whose own character and just elevation in life, I thought, must have impressed him with all due regard for great abilities and attainments. As the story had been much talked of, and apparently from good authority, I could not but have animadverted upon it in this work, had it been as was alleged; but from my earnest love of truth, and having found reason to think that there might be a mistake, I presumed to write to his Lordship, requesting an explanation; and it is with the sincerest pleasure that I am enabled to assure the world that there is no foundation for it, the fact being, that owing to some neglect or accident, Johnson's letter never came to Lord Hawkesbury's hands. I should have thought it strange indeed, if that noble Lord had undervalued my illustrious friend; but instead of this being the case, his Lordship, in the very polite answer with which he was pleased immediately to honour me, thus expresses himself:—"I have always respected the memory of Dr. Johnson, and admire his writings; and I frequently read many parts of them with pleasure and great improvement."

All applications for the Royal Mercy having

failed, Dr. Dodd prepared himself for death; and, with a warmth of gratitude, wrote to Dr. Johnson as follows:

“ June 25, *Midnight.*”

“ ACCEPT, thou *great* and *good* heart, my earnest and fervent thanks and prayers for all thy benevolent and kind efforts in my behalf.—Oh! Dr. Johnson! as I sought your knowledge at an early hour in life, would to heaven I had cultivated the love and acquaintance of so excellent a man!—I pray God most sincerely to bless you with the highest transports—the infelt satisfaction of *humane* and benevolent exertions!—And admitted, as I trust I shall be, to the realms of bliss before you, I shall hail *your* arrival there with transports, and rejoice to acknowledge that you were my Comforter, my Advocate, and my *Friend*! God *be ever with you!*”

Dr. Johnson lastly wrote to Dr. Dodd this solemn and soothing letter:

“ TO THE REVEREND DR. DODD.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ THAT which is appointed to all men is now coming upon you. Outward circumstances, the eyes and the thoughts of men are below the notice of an immortal being about to stand the trial for eternity, before the Supreme Judge of heaven and earth. Be comforted: your crime, morally or religiously considered, has no very deep dye of turpitude. It corrupted no man's principles; it attacked no man's life. It involved only a temporary and reparable injury. Of this, and of all other sins, you are earnestly to repent; and may God, who knoweth our frailty, and desireth not our death, accept your repentance, for the sake of his Son *JESUS CHRIST* our Lord.

"In requital of those well intended offices which you are pleased so emphatically to acknowledge, let me beg that you make in your devotions one petition for my eternal welfare."

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most affectionate servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"June 26, 1777."

Under the copy of this letter I found written, in Johnson's own hand, "Next day, June 27, he was executed."

To conclude this interesting episode with a useful application, let us now attend to the reflections of Johnson at the end of the "Occasional Papers," concerning the unfortunate Dr. Dodd.—"Such were the last thoughts of a man whom we have seen exulting in popularity, and sunk in shame. For his reputation, which no man can give to himself, those who conferred it are to answer. Of his publick ministry the means of judging were sufficiently attainable. He must be allowed to preach well whose sermons strike his audience with forcible conviction. Of his life, those who thought it consistent with his doctrine did not originally form false notions. He was, at first, what he endeavoured to make others; but the world broke down his resolution, and, he in time ceased to exemplify his own instructions."

"Let those who are tempted to his faults tremble at his punishment; and those whom he impressed from the pulpit with religious sentiments endeavour to confirm them, by considering the regret and self-abhorrence with which he reviewed in prison his deviations from rectitude."

<sup>9</sup> [See Dr. Johnson's final opinion concerning Dr. Dodd, under April 18, 1783. M.]

Johnson gave us this evening, in his happy discriminating manner, a portrait of the late Mr. Fitzherbert of Derbyshire. "There was (said he) no sparkle, no brilliancy in Fitzherbert; but I never knew a man who was so generally acceptable. He made every body quite easy, overpowered nobody by the superiority of his talents, made no man think worse of himself by being his rival, seemed always to listen, did not oblige you to hear much from him, and did not oppose what you said. Every body liked him; but he had no friend, as I understand the word, nobody with whom he exchanged intimate thoughts. People were willing to think well of every thing about him. A gentleman was making an affected rant, as many people do, of great feelings about 'his dear son,' who was at school near London; how anxious he was lest he might be ill, and what he would give to see him. 'Can't you (said Fitzherbert) take a postchaise and go to him?' This, to be sure, *finished* the affected man, but there was not much in it<sup>1</sup>. However, this was circulated as wit for a whole winter, and, I believe, part of a summer too; a proof that he was no very witty man. He was an instance of the truth of the observation, that a man will please more upon the whole by negative qualities than by positive; by never offending than by giving a great deal of delight. In the first place, men hate more

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gisborne, Physician to his Majesty's Household, has obligingly communicated to me a fuller account of this story than had reached Dr. Johnson. The affected gentleman was the late John Gilbert Cooper, Esq. authour of a *Life of Socrates*, and of some poems in Dodsley's collection. Mr. Fitzherbert found him one morning, apparently, in such violent agitation on account of the indisposition of his son as to seem beyond the power of comfort. At length, however, he exclaimed, "I will write an Elegy." Mr. Fitzherbert, being satisfied by this of the sincerity of his emotions, slyly said, "Had not you better take a postchaise and go and see him?" It was the shrewdness of the insinuation which made the story be circulated.

steadily than they love; and if I have said something to hurt a man once, I shall not get the better of this, by saying many things to please him."

Tuesday, September 16, Dr. Johnson having mentioned to me the extraordinary size and price of some cattle reared by Dr. Taylor, I rode out with our host, surveyed his farm, and was shown one cow which he had sold for a hundred and twenty guineas, and another for which he had been offered a hundred and thirty. Taylor thus described to me his old schoolfellow and friend, Johnson: "He is a man of a very clear head, great power of words, and a very gay imagination; but there is no disputing with him. He will not hear you, and having a louder voice than you, must roar you down."

In the afternoon I tried to get Dr. Johnson to like the Poems of Mr. Hamilton of Bangour, which I had brought with me: I had been much pleased with them at a very early age: the impression still remained on my mind; it was confirmed by the opinion of my friend the Honourable Andrew Erskine, himself both a good poet and a good critick, who thought Hamilton as true a poet as ever wrote, and that his not having fame was unaccountable. Johnson, upon repeated occasions, while I was at Ashbourne, talked slightly of Hamilton. He said there was no power of thinking in his verses, nothing that strikes one, nothing better than what you generally find in magazines; and that the highest praise they deserved was that they were very well for a gentleman to hand about among his friends. He said the imitation of *Ne sit ancillæ tibi amor*, &c. was too solemn; he read part of it at the beginning: He read the beautiful pathetic song, "Ah! the poor shepherd's mournful fate," and did not seem to give attention to what

I had been used to think tender elegant strains, but laughed at the rhyme, in Scotch pronunciation, *wishes* and *blushes*, reading *wushes*—and there he stopped. He owned that the epitaph on Lord Newhall was pretty well done. He read the “Inscription in a Summer House,” and a little of the imitations of Horace’s Epistles; but said he found nothing to make him desire to read on. When I urged that there were some good poetical passages in the book, “Where (said he) will you find so large a collection without some?” I thought the description of Winter might obtain his approbation :

“See Winter from the frozen north  
Drives his iron chariot forth?  
His grisly hand in icy chains  
Fair Tweed’s silver flood constrains,” &c.

He asked why an “*iron* chariot?” and said “icy chains” was an old image. I was struck with the uncertainty of taste, and somewhat sorry that a poet whom I had long read with fondness was not approved by Dr. Johnson. I comforted myself with thinking that the beauties were too delicate for his robust perceptions. Garrick maintained that he had not a taste for the finest productions of genius: but I was sensible that, when he took the trouble to analyse critically, he generally convinced us that he was right.

In the evening the Reverend Mr. Seward, of Lichfield, who was passing through Ashbourne, in his way home, drank tea with us. Johnson described him thus:—“Sir, his ambition is to be a fine talker; so he goes to Buxton, and such places, where he may find companies to listen to him. And, sir, he is a valetudinarian, one of those who are always mending themselves. I do not know a more disagreeable character than a vale-

tudinarian, who thinks he may do any thing that is for his ease, and indulges himself in the grossest freedoms: sir, he brings himself to the state of a hog in a sty."

Dr. Taylor's nose happening to bleed, he said, it was because he had omitted to have himself blooded four days after a quarter of a year's interval. Dr. Johnson, who was a great dabbler in physick, disapproved much of periodical bleeding. "For (said he) you accustom yourself to an evacuation which Nature cannot perform of herself, and therefore she cannot help you, should you from forgetfulness or any other cause omit it; so you may be suddenly suffocated. You may accustom yourself to other periodical evacuations, because should you omit them, Nature can supply the omission; but Nature cannot open a vein to blood you<sup>2</sup>."—"I do not like to take an emetic (said Taylor) for fear of breaking some small vessels."—"Poh! (said Johnson), if you have so many things that will break, you had better break your neck at once, and there's an end on't. You will break no small vessels:" (blowing with high derision).

I mentioned to Dr. Johnson that David Hume's persisting in his infidelity, when he was dying, shocked me much. JOHNSON. "Why should it shock you, sir? Hume owned he had never read the New Testament with attention. Here then was a man who had been at no pains to inquire into the truth of religion, and had continually turned his mind the other way. It was not to be expected that the prospect of death would alter his way of thinking, unless God should send an angel to set him right." I said, I had reason to believe that the thought of annihilation gave Hume

<sup>2</sup> [Nature, however, may supply the evacuation by an hæmorrhage. K.]





Paoli:—"That it is impossible not to be afraid of death; and that those who at the time of dying are not afraid are not thinking of death, but of applause, or something else, which keeps death out of their sight: so that all men are equally afraid of death when they see it; only some have a power of turning their sight away from it better than others."

On Wednesday, September 17, Dr. Butter, physician at Derby, drank tea with us; and it was settled that Dr. Johnson and I should go on Friday and dine with him. Johnson said, "I'm glad of this." He seemed weary of the uniformity of life at Dr. Taylor's.

Talking of biography, I said, in writing a life, a man's peculiarities should be mentioned, because they mark his character. JOHNSON. "Sir, there is no doubt as to peculiarities: the question is, whether a man's vices should be mentioned; for instance, whether it should be mentioned that Addison and Parnell drank too freely; for people will probably more easily indulge in drinking from knowing this; so that more ill may be done by the example than good by telling the whole truth." Here was an instance of his varying from himself in talk; for when Lord Hailes and he sat one morning calmly conversing in my house at Edinburgh, I well remember that Dr. Johnson maintained that, "If a man is to write *A Panegyrick*, he may keep vices out of sight; but if he professes to write *A Life* he must represent it really as it was:" and when I objected to the danger of telling that Parnell drank to excess, he said, that "it would produce an instructive caution to avoid drinking, when it was seen, that even the learning and genius of Parnell could be debased by it." And in the Hebrides he maintained, as appears from my "Journal," that

<sup>1</sup> Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, 3d edit. p. 240.

a man's intimate friend should mention his faults if he writes his life.

He had this evening, partly, I suppose, from the spirit of contradiction to his Whig friend, a violent argument with Dr. Taylor, as to the inclinations of the people of England at this time towards the Royal Family of Stuart. He grew so outrageous as to say, "that, if England were fairly polled, the present King would be sent away to-night, and his adherents hanged to-morrow." Taylor, who was as violent a Whig as Johnson was a Tory, was roused by this to a pitch of bellowing. He denied, loudly, what Johnson said; and maintained, that there was an abhorrence against the Stuart family, though he admitted that the people were not much attached to the present King. JOHNSON. "Sir, the state of the country is this: the people knowing it to be agreed on all hands that this King has not the hereditary right to the crown, and there being no hope that he who has it can be restored, have grown cold and indifferent upon the subject of loyalty, and have no warm attachment to any King. They would not, therefore, risk any thing to restore the exiled family. They would not give twenty shillings a piece to bring it about. But if a mere vote could do it, there would be twenty to one; at least, there would be a very great majority of voices for it. For, sir, you are to consider, that all those who think a King has a right to his crown, as a man has to his estate, which is the just opinion, would be for restoring the King who certainly has the hereditary right, could he be trusted with it; in which there would be no danger now, when laws and every thing else are

\* Dr. Taylor was very ready to make this admission, because the party with which he was connected was not in power. There was then some truth in it, owing to the pertinacity of factious clamour. Had he lived till now, it would have been impossible for him to deny that his Majesty possesses the warmest affection of his people.

so much advanced: and every King will govern by the laws. And you must also consider, sir, that there is nothing on the other side to oppose to this; for it is not alleged by any one that the present family has any inherent right: so that the Whigs could not have a contest between two rights."

Dr. Taylor admitted, that if the question as to hereditary right were to be tried by a poll of the people of England, to be sure the abstract doctrine would be given in favour of the family of Stuart; but he said, the conduct of that family, which occasioned their expulsion, was so fresh in the minds of the people, that they would not vote for a restoration. Dr. Johnson, I think, was contented with the admission as to the hereditary right, leaving the original point in dispute, *viz.* what the people upon the whole would do, taking in right and affection; for he said, people were afraid of a change, even though they think it right. Dr. Taylor said something of the slight foundation of the hereditary right of the house of Stuart. "Sir (said Johnson), the house of Stuart succeeded to the full right of both the houses of York and Lancaster, whose common source had the undisputed right. A right to a throne is like a right to any thing else. Possession is sufficient where no better right can be shown. This was the case with the Royal Family of England, as it is now with the King of France: for as to the first beginning of the right, we are in the dark."

Thursday, September 18. Last night Dr. Johnson had proposed that the crystal lustre, or chandelier, in Dr. Taylor's large room, should be lighted up some time or other. Taylor said, it should be lighted up next night. "That will do very well (said I), for it is Dr. Johnson's birthday." When we were in the Isle of Sky, John-

son had desired me not to mention his birth day. He did not seem pleased at this time that I mentioned it, and said (somewhat sternly), "he would *not* have the lustre lighted the next day."

Some ladies, who had been present yesterday when I mentioned his birth day, came to dinner to-day, and plagued him unintentionally by wishing him joy. I know not why he disliked having his birth day mentioned, unless it were that it reminded him of his approaching nearer to death, of which he had a constant dread.

I mentioned to him a friend of mine who was formerly gloomy from low spirits, and much distressed by the fear of death, but was now uniformly placid, and contemplated his dissolution without any perturbation. "Sir (said Johnson), this is only a disordered imagination taking a different turn."

We talked of a collection being made of all the English Poets who had published a volume of poems. Johnson told me "that a Mr. Coxeter<sup>a</sup>, whom he knew, had gone the greatest length towards this; having collected, I think, about five hundred volumes of poets whose works were little known; but that upon his death Tom Osborne bought them, and they were dispersed, which he thought a pity, as it was curious to see any series complete; and in every volume of poems something good may be found."

He observed, that a gentleman of eminence in literature had got into a bad style of poetry of late. "He puts (said he) a very common thing

<sup>a</sup> [Thomas Coxeter, Esq. who had also made a large collection of old plays, and from whose manuscript notes the *Lives of the English Poets*, by Shiels and Cibber, were principally compiled, as should have been mentioned in a former page. See p. 30, of this volume. Mr. Coxeter was bred at Trinity College, Oxford, and died in London, April 17, 1747, in his fifty-ninth year. A particular account of him may be found in "The Gentleman's Magazine" for 1781, p. 173. M.]

in a strange dress till he does not know it himself, and thinks other people do not know it."

**BOSWELL.** "That is owing to his being so much versant in old English poetry." **JOHNSON.** "What is that to the purpose, sir? If I say a man is drunk, and you tell me it is owing to his taking much drink, the matter is not mended. No, sir, ——— has taken to an odd mode. For example; he'd write thus :

**'Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,  
'Wearing out life's evening gray.'**

*Gray evening* is common enough; but *evening gray* he'd think fine.—Stay;—we'll make out the stanza:

**' Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,  
Wearing out life's evening gray:  
Smite thy bosom, sage, and tell,  
What is bliss? and which the way? "**

**BOSWELL.** "But why smite his bosom; sir?"

JOHNSON. "Why, to show he was in earnest" (smiling).—He at an after period added the following stanza :

"Thus I spoke; and speaking sigh'd;  
 —Searce repress'd the starting tear;—  
 When the smiling sage reply'd—  
 —Come, my lad, and drink some beer."

**I cannot help thinking the first stanza very good solemn poetry, as also the first three lines of the**

\* As some of my readers may be gratified by reading the progress of this little composition, I shall insert it from my notes. "When Dr. Johnson and I were sitting *tête-à-tête* at the Mitre Tavern, May 9, 1778, he said, '*Where is bliss,*' would be better. He then added a ludicrous stanza, but would not repeat it lest I should take it down. It was somewhat as follows; the last line I am sure I remember:

'While I thus  
'The hoary  
Come, my lad, and drink some beer.'

cried,  
seer,  
reply'd,

"In spring, 1779, when in better humour, he made the second stanza, as in the text. There was only one variation afterwards made

second: Its last line is an excellent burlesque surprise on gloomy sentimental inquirers. And, perhaps, the advice is as good as can be given to a low-spirited dissatisfied being:—"Don't trouble your head with sickly thinking: take a cup, and be merry."

Friday, September 19, after breakfast, Dr. Johnson and I set out in Dr. Taylor's chaise to go to Derby. The day was fine, and we resolved to go by Keddlestone, the seat of Lord Scarsdale, that I might see his Lordship's fine house. I was struck with the magnificence of the building; and the extensive park; with the finest verdure, covered with deer, and cattle, and sheep, delighted me. The number of old oaks, of an immense size, filled me with a sort of respectful admiration: for one of them sixty pounds was offered. The excellent smooth gravel roads; the large piece of water formed by his Lordship from some small brooks, with a handsome barge upon it; the venerable Gothic church, now the family chapel, just by the house; in short, the grand group of objects agitated and distended my mind in a most agreeable manner. "One should think (said I) that the proprietor of all this *must* be happy."—"Nay, sir (said Johnson), all this excludes but one evil—poverty."

on my suggestion, which was changing *heavy* in the third line to *smiling*, both to avoid a sameness with the epithet in the first line, and to describe the hermit in his pleasantry. He was then very well pleased that I should preserve it."

7 When I mentioned Dr. Johnson's remark to a lady of admirable good sense and quickness of understanding, she observed, "It is true all this excludes only one evil; but how much good does it let in?"—To this observation much praise has been justly given. Let me then now do myself the honour to mention that the lady who made it was the late Margaret Montgomerie, my very valuable wife, and the very affectionate mother of my children, who, if they inherit her good qualities, will have no reason to complain of their lot. *Das magna parentum virtus.*

Our names were sent up, and a well dressed, elderly housekeeper, a most distinct articulator, showed us the house; which I need not describe, as there is an account of it published in "Adams's Works in Architecture." Dr. Johnson thought better of it to-day than when he saw it before; for he had lately attacked it violently, saying, "It would do excellently for a town-hall. The large room with the pillars (said he) would do for the Judges to sit in at the assizes; the circular room for a jury chamber; and the room above for prisoners." Still he thought the large room ill lighted, and of no use but for dancing in; and the bedchambers but indifferent rooms; and that the immense sum which it cost was injudiciously laid out: Dr. Taylor had put him in mind of his *appearing* pleased with the house. "But (said he) that was when Lord Scarsdale was present. Politeness obliges us to appear pleased with a man's works when he is present. No man will be so ill bred as to question you. You may therefore pay compliments without saying what is not true. I should say to Lord Scarsdale of his large room, 'My Lord, this is the most *costly* room that I ever saw;' which is true."

Dr. Manningham, physician in London, who was visiting at Lord Scarsdale's, accompanied us through many of the rooms, and soon afterwards my Lord himself, to whom Dr. Johnson was known, appeared, and did the honours of the house. We talked of Mr. Langton. Johnson, with a warm vehemence of affectionate regard, exclaimed, "The earth does not bear a worthier man than Bennet Langton." We saw a good many fine pictures, which I think are described in one of "Young's Tours." There is a printed catalogue of them, which the housekeeper put into my hand; I should like to view them at leisure. I was much struck with Daniel interpreting Nebuchad-



nezzar's dream, by Rembrandt.—We were shown a pretty large library. In his Lordship's dressing room lay Johnson's small Dictionary: he showed it to me with some eagerness, saying, "Look'ye! *Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris.*" He observed also Goldsmith's "Animated Nature;" and said, "Here's our friend! The poor Doctor would have been happy to hear of this."

In our way, Johnson strongly expressed his love of driving fast in a postchaise. "If (said he) I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a postchaise with a pretty woman; but she should be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation." I observed, that we were this day to stop just where the Highland army did in 1745. JOHNSON. "It was a noble attempt." BOSWELL. "I wish we could have an authentick history of it." JOHNSON. "If you were not an idle dog you might write it, by collecting from every body what they can tell, and putting down your authorities." BOSWELL. "But I could not have the advantage of it in my lifetime." JOHNSON. "You might have the satisfaction of its fame, by printing it in Holland; and as to profit, consider how long it was before writing came to be considered in a pecuniary view. Baretti says, he is the first man that ever received copy money in Italy." I said that I would endeavour to do what Dr. Johnson suggested; and I thought that I might write so as to venture to publish my "History of the Civil War in Great Britain in 1745 and 1746," without being obliged to go to a foreign press<sup>1</sup>.

When we arrived at Derby, Dr. Butter accompanied us to see the manufactory of china there.

<sup>1</sup> I am now happy to understand that Mr. John Home, who was himself gallantly in the field for the reigning family, in that interesting warfare, but is generous enough to do justice to the other side, is preparing an account of it for the press.

I admired the ingenuity and delicate art with which a man fashioned clay into a cup, a saucer, or a teapot, while a boy turned round a wheel to give the mass rotundity. I thought this as excellent in its species of power, as making good verses in its species. Yet I had no respect for this potter. Neither, indeed, has a man of any extent of thinking for a mere versemaker, in whose numbers, however perfect, there is no poetry, no mind. The china was beautiful, but Dr. Johnson justly observed it was too dear; for that he could have vessels of silver of the same size, as cheap as what were here made of porcelain.

I felt a pleasure in walking about Derby, such as I always have in walking about any town to which I am not accustomed. There is an immediate sensation of novelty; and one speculates on the way in which life is passed in it, which, although there is a sameness everywhere upon the whole, is yet minutely diversified. The minute diversities in every thing are wonderful. Talking of shaving the other night at Dr. Taylor's, Dr. Johnson said, "Sir, of a thousand shavers, two do not shave so much alike as not to be distinguished." I thought this not possible, till he specified so many of the varieties in shaving;—holding the razor more or less perpendicular;—drawing long or short strokes;—beginning at the upper part of the face, or the under—at the right side or the left side. Indeed, when one considers what variety of sounds can be uttered by the windpipe, in the compass of a very small aperture, we may be convinced how many degrees of difference there may be in the application of a razor.

We dined with Dr. Butter<sup>9</sup>, whose lady is

<sup>9</sup>. [Dr. Butter was at this time a practising physician at Derby. He afterwards removed to London, where he died in his 79th year, March 22, 1805. He is authour of several medical tracts. M.]

daughter of my cousin Sir John Douglas, whose grandson is now presumptive heir of the noble family of Queensberry. Johnson and he had a good deal of medical conversation. Johnson said, he had somewhere or other given an account of Dr. Nichols's discourse "*De Animâ Medicâ*." He told us "that whatever a man's distemper was, Dr. Nichols would not attend him as a physician if his mind was not at ease; for he believed that no medicines would have any influence. He once attended a man in trade, upon whom he found none of the medicines he prescribed had any effect; he asked the man's wife privately whether his affairs were not in a bad way? She said no. He continued his attendance some time, still without success. At length the man's wife told him, she had discovered that her husband's affairs *were* in a bad way. When Goldsmith was dying, Dr. Turton said to him, 'Your pulse is in greater disorder than it should be, from the degree of fever which you have: is your mind at ease?' Goldsmith answered it was not."

After dinner, Mrs. Butter went with me to see the silk mill which Mr. John Lombe had<sup>1</sup> had a patent for, having brought away the contrivance from Italy. I am not very conversant with mechanicks; but the simplicity of this machine, and its multiplied operations, struck me with an agreeable surprise. I had learned from Dr. Johnson, during this interview, not to think with a dejected indifference of the works of art, and the pleasures of life, because life is uncertain and short; but to consider such indifference as a failure of reason, a morbidness of mind; for happiness should

<sup>1</sup> See Hutton's History of Derby, a book which is deservedly esteemed for its information, accuracy, and good narrative. Indeed the age in which we live is eminently distinguished by topographical excellence.

be cultivated as much as we can, and the objects which are instrumental to it should be steadily considered as of importance, with a reference not only to ourselves, but to multitudes in successive ages. Though it is proper to value small parts, as

“Sands make the mountain, moments make the year<sup>2</sup>,”

yet we must contemplate collectively, to have a just estimation of objects. One moment's being uneasy or not seems of no consequence; yet this may be thought of the next, and the next, and so on, till there is a large portion of misery. In the same way one must think of happiness, of learning, of friendship. We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over; so in a series of kindnesses there is at last one which makes the heart run over. We must not divide objects of our attention into minute parts, and think separately of each part. It is by contemplating a large mass of human existence, that a man, while he sets a just value on his own life, does not think of his death as annihilating all that is great and pleasing in the world, as if actually *contained in his mind*, according to Berkeley's reverie. If his imagination be not sickly and feeble, it “wings its distant way” far beyond himself, and views the world in unceasing activity of every sort. It must be acknowledged, however, that Pope's plaintive reflection, that all things would be as gay as ever on the day of his death, is natural and common. We are apt to transfer to all around us our own gloom, without considering that at any given point of time there is, perhaps, as much youth and gaiety in the world as at another. Be-

<sup>2</sup> Young.

fore I came into this life, in which I have had so many pleasant scenes, have not thousands and ten thousands of deaths and funerals happened, and have not families been in grief for their nearest relations? But have those dismal circumstances at all affected *me*? Why then should the gloomy scenes which I experience, or which I know, affect others? Let us guard against imagining that there is an end of felicity upon earth, when we ourselves grow old, or are unhappy.

Dr. Johnson told us at tea, that when some of Dr. Dodd's pious friends were trying to console him by saying that he was going to leave "a wretched world," he had honesty enough not to join in the cant:—"No, no (said he), it has been a very agreeable world to me." Johnson added, "I respect Dodd for thus speaking the truth; for, to be sure, he had for several years enjoyed a life of great voluptuousness."

He told us, that Dodd's city friends stood by him so, that a thousand pounds were ready to be given to the gaoler, if he would let him escape. He added, that he knew a friend of Dodd's, who walked about Newgate for some time on the evening before the day of his execution, with five hundred pounds in his pocket, ready to be paid to any of the turnkeys who could get him out: but it was too late; for he was watched with much circumspection. He said, Dodd's friends had an image of him made of wax, which was to have been left in his place; and he believed it was carried into the prison.

Johnson disapproved of Dr. Dodd's leaving the world persuaded that "The Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren," was of his own writing. "But, sir (said I), you contributed to the deception; for when Mr. Seward expressed a doubt to you that it was not Dodd's own,

because it had a great deal more force of mind in it than any thing known to be his, you answered, — ‘Why should you think so? Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.’”

JOHNSON. “Sir, as Dodd got it from me to pass as his own, while that could do him any good, that was an *implied promise* that I should not own it. To own it, therefore, would have been telling a lie, with the addition of breach of promise, which was worse than simply telling a lie to make it be believed it was Dodd’s. Besides, sir, I did not *directly* tell a lie: I left the matter uncertain. Perhaps I thought that Seward would not believe it the less to be mine for what I said; but I would not put it in his power to say I had owned it.”

He praised Blair’s sermons: “Yet,” said he (willing to let us see he was aware that fashionable fame, however deserved, is not always the most lasting), “perhaps they may not be reprinted after seven years; at least not after Blair’s death.”

He said, “Goldsmith was a plant that flowered late. There appeared nothing remarkable about him when he was young; though when he had got high in fame, one of his friends began to recollect something of his being distinguished at College”. Goldsmith in the same manner recollected more of that friend’s early years, as he grew a greater man.”

I mentioned that Lord Monboddo told me, he awaked every morning at four, and then for his health got up and walked in his room naked, with the window open, which he called taking an *air bath*; after which he went to bed again, and

<sup>2</sup> [He was distinguished in college, as appears from a circumstance mentioned by Dr. Kearney. See vol. i. p. 349. M.]

slept two hours more. Johnson, who was always ready to beat down any thing that seemed to be exhibited with disproportionate importance, thus observed: "I suppose, sir, there is no more in it than this; he wakes at four, and cannot sleep till he chills himself, and makes the warmth of the bed a grateful sensation."

I talked of the difficulty of rising in the morning. Dr. Johnson told me, "that the learned Mrs. Carter, at that period when she was eager in study, did not awake as early as she wished, and she therefore had a contrivance, that, at a certain hour her chamber light should burn a string to which a heavy weight was suspended, which then fell with a strong sudden noise: this roused her from sleep, and then she had no difficulty in getting up." But I said *that* was my difficulty; and wished there could be some medicine invented which would make one rise without pain, which I never did, unless after lying in bed a very long time. Perhaps there may be something in the stores of Nature which could do this. I have thought of a pulley to raise me gradually; but that would give me pain, as it would counteract my internal inclination. I would have something that can dissipate the *vis inertiae*, and give elasticity to the muscles. As I imagine that the human body may be put, by the operation of other substances, into any state in which it has ever been; and as I have experienced a state in which rising from bed was not disagreeable, but easy, nay, sometimes agreeable; I suppose that this state may be produced, if we knew by what. We can heat the body, we can cool it; we can give it tension or relaxation; and surely it is possible to bring it into a state in which rising from bed will not be a pain.

Johnson observed, that "a man should take a

sufficient quantity of sleep, which Dr. Mead says is between seven and nine hours." I told him that Dr. Cullen said to me, that a man should not take more sleep than he can take at once. JOHNSON. "This rule, sir, cannot hold in all cases; for many people have their sleep broken by sickness; and surely, Cullen would not have a man to get up after having slept but an hour. Such a regimen would soon end in a *long sleep*." Dr. Taylor remarked, I think very justly, that "a man who does not feel an inclination to sleep at the ordinary times, instead of being stronger than other people, must not be well; for a man in health has all the natural inclinations to eat, drink, and sleep in a strong degree."

Johnson advised me to-night not to *refine* in the education of my children. "Life (said he) will not bear refinement: you must do as other people do."

As we drove back to Ashbourne, Dr. Johnson recommended to me, as he had often done, to drink water only: "For (said he) you are then sure not to get drunk; whereas, if you drink wine, you are never sure." I said, drinking wine was a pleasure which I was unwilling to give up. "Why, sir (said he), there is no doubt that not to

<sup>4</sup> This regimen was, however, practised by Bishop Ken, of whom Hawkins (*not Sir John*) in his life of that venerable Prelate, page 4, tells us, "And that neither his study might be the aggressor on his hours of instruction, or what he judged his duty, prevent his improvements; or, both his closet addresses to his God; he strictly accustomed himself to but one sleep, which often obliged him to rise at one or two of the clock in the morning, and sometimes sooner; and grow so habitual that it continued with him almost till his last illness. And so lively and cheerful was his temper, that he would be very facetious and entertaining to his friends in the evening, even when it was perceived that with difficulty he kept his eyes open; and then seemed to go to rest with no other purpose than the refreshing and enabling him with more vigour and cheerfulness to sing his morning hymn, as he then used to do to his lute before he put on his clothes."



drink wine is a great deduction from life; but it may be necessary." He however owned, that in his opinion a free use of wine did not shorten life; and said, he would not give less for the life of a certain Scotch Lord (whom he named) celebrated for hard drinking, than for that of a sober man. "But stay (said he, with his usual intelligence and accuracy of inquiry), does it take much wine to make him drunk?" I answered, "a great deal either of wine or strong punch."—"Then (said he) that is the worse." I presume to illustrate my friend's observation thus: "A fortress which soon surrenders has its walls less shattered, than when a long and obstinate resistance is made."

I ventured to mention a person who was as violent a Scotchman as he was an Englishman; and literally had the same contempt for an Englishman compared with a Scotchman, that he had for a Scotchman compared with an Englishman; and that he would say of Dr. Johnson, "Damned rascal! to talk as he does of the Scotch." This seemed, for a moment, "to give him pause." It, perhaps, presented his extreme prejudice against the Scotch in a point of view somewhat new to him by the effect of *contrast*.

By the time when we returned to Ashbourne, Dr. Taylor was gone to bed. Johnson and I sat up a long time by ourselves.

He was much diverted with an article which I showed him in the "Critical Review" of this year, giving an account of a curious publication, entitled, "A spiritual Diary and Soliloquies, by John Rutty, M. D." Dr. Rutty was one of the people called Quakers, a physician of some eminence in Dublin, and authour of several works. This Diary, which was kept from 1753 to 1775, the year in which he died, and was now published

in two volumes octavo, exhibited in the simplicity of his heart, a minute and honest register of the state of his mind; which, though frequently laughable enough, was not more so than the history of many men would be, if recorded with equal fairness.

The following specimens were extracted by the Reviewers:

“Tenth month, 1753.

“23. Indulgence in bed an hour too long.

“Twelfth month, 17. An hypochondriack obnubilation from wind and indigestion.

“Ninth month, 28. An over dose of whisky.

“29. A dull, cross, cholerick day.

“First month, 1757—22. A little swinish at dinner and repast.

“31. Dogged on provocation.

“Second month, 5. Very dogged or snappish.

“14. Snappish on fasting.

“26. Cursed snappishness to those under me, on a bodily indisposition.

“Third month, 11. On a provocation, exercised a dumb resentment for two days instead of scolding.

“22. Scolded too vehemently.

“23. Dogged again.

“Fourth month, 29. Mechanically and sinfully dogged.”

Johnson laughed heartily at this good Quietist's self-condemning minutes; particularly at his mentioning, with such a serious regret, occasional instances of “*swinishness* in eating, and *doggedness of temper*.” He thought the observations of the Critical Reviewers upon the importance of a man to himself so ingenious and so well expressed, that I shall here introduce them.

After observing, that "there are few writers who have gained any reputation by recording their own actions," they say,

"We may reduce the egotists to four classes. In the *first* we have Julius Cæsar: he relates his own transactions; but he relates them with peculiar grace and dignity, and his narrative is supported by the greatness of his character and achievements. In the *second* class we have Marcus Antoninus: this writer has given us a series of reflections on his own life; but his sentiments are so noble, his morality so sublime, that his meditations are universally admired. In the *third* class we have some others of tolerable credit, who have given importance to their own private history by an intermixture of literary anecdotes, and the occurrences of their own times: the celebrated *Huetius* has published an entertaining volume upon this plan, '*De rebus ad eum pertinentibus.*' In the *fourth* class we have the journalists, temporal and spiritual: Elias Ashmole, William Lilly, George Whitefield, John Wesley, and a thousand other old women and fanatick writers of memoirs and meditations."

I mentioned to him that Dr. Hugh Blair, in his lectures on Rhetorick and Belles Lettres, which I heard him deliver at Edinburgh, had animadverted on the Johnsonian style as too pompous; and attempted to imitate it, by giving a sentence of Addison in "The Spectator," No. 411, in the manner of Johnson. When treating of the utility of the pleasures of imagination in preserving us from vice, it is observed of those "who know not how to be idle and innocent," that "their very first step out of business is into vice or folly;" which Dr. Blair supposed would have been expressed in "The Rambler," thus: "their very first step out of the regions of business is into the

perturbation of vice; or the vacuity of folly<sup>s</sup>."

JOHNSON. "Sir, these are not the words I should have used. No, sir; the imitators of my style have not hit it: Miss Aikin has done it the best; for she has imitated the sentiment as well as the diction."

I intend, before this work is concluded, to exhibit specimens of imitation of my friend's style in various modes; some caricaturing or mimicking it, and some formed upon it, whether intentionally or with a degree of similarity to it, of which, perhaps, the writers were not conscious.

In Baretti's Review, which he published in Italy, under the title of "*Frusta Letteraria*," it is observed, that Dr. Robertson the historian had formed his style upon that of "*Il celebre Samuele Johnson*." My friend himself was of that opinion; for he once said to me, in a pleasant humour, "Sir, if Robertson's style be faulty, he owes it to me; that is, having too many words, and those too big ones."

I read to him a letter which Lord Monboddo had written to me, containing some critical remarks upon the style of his "*Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*." His Lordship praised the very fine passage upon landing at Icolmkill<sup>6</sup>; but his own style being exceedingly

<sup>5</sup> When Dr. Blair published his "*Lectures*," he was invidiously attacked for having omitted his censure on Johnson's style, and, on the contrary, praising it highly. But before that time Johnson's "*Lives of the Poets*" had appeared, in which his style was considerably easier than when he wrote "*The Rambler*." It would, therefore, have been uncandid in Blair, even supposing his criticism to have been just, to have preserved it.

<sup>6</sup> "We were now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses,

dry and hard, he disapproved of the richness of Johnson's language, and of his frequent use of metaphorical expressions. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, this criticism would be just if in my style superfluous words, or words too big for the thoughts, could be pointed out; but this I do not believe can be done. For instance; in the passage which Lord Monboddo admires, 'We were now treading that illustrious region,' the word *illustrious* contributes nothing to the mere narration; for the fact might be told without it: but it is not, therefore, superfluous; for it wakes the mind to peculiar attention where something of more than usual importance is to be presented. 'Illustrious!'—for what? and then the sentence proceeds to expand the circumstances connected with Iona. And, sir, as to metaphorical expression, that is a great excellence in style when it is used with propriety; for it gives you two ideas for one;—conveys the meaning more luminously, and generally with a perception of delight.

He told me that he had been asked to undertake the new edition of the *Biographia Britannica*, but had declined it; which he afterwards said to me he regretted. In this regret many will join, because it would have procured us more of Johnson's most delightful species of writing; and

whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us, indifferent and unmoved, over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. The man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."

Had our Tour produced nothing else but this sublime passage, the world must have acknowledged that it was not made in vain. Sir Joseph Banks, the present respectable President of the Royal Society, told me, he was so much struck on reading it that he clasped his hands together, and remained for some time in an attitude of silent admiration.

although my friend Dr. Kippis' has hitherto discharged the task judiciously, distinctly, and with more impartiality than might have been expected from a Separatist, it were to have been wished that the superintendence of this literary Temple of Fame had been assigned to "a friend to the constitution in Church and State." We should not then have had it too much crowded with obscure dissenting teachers, doubtless men of merit and worth, but not quite to be numbered amongst "the most eminent persons who have flourished in Great Britain and Ireland."

On Saturday, September 20, after breakfast, when Taylor was gone out to his farm, Dr. Johnson and I had a serious conversation by ourselves on melancholy and madness; which he was, I always thought, erroneously inclined to confound together. Melancholy, like "great wit," may be "near allied to madness;" but there is, in my opinion, a distinct separation between them. When he talked of madness, he was to be understood as speaking of those who were in any great degree disturbed, or as it is commonly expressed, "troubled in mind." Some of the ancient philo-

<sup>7</sup> [After having given to the publick the first five volumes of a new edition of *BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA*, between the years 1778 and 1793, Dr. Kippis died, October 8, 1795; and the work is not likely to be soon completed. M.]

<sup>8</sup> In this censure, which has been carelessly uttered, I carelessly joined. But in justice to Dr. Kippis, who, with that manly candid good temper which marks his character, set me right, I now with pleasure retract it; and I desire it may be particularly observed, as pointed out by him to me, that, "The new lives of dissenting Divines in the first four volumes of the second edition of the '*Biographia Britannica*,' are those of John Abernethy, Thomas Amory, George Benson, Hugh Broughton the learned Puritan, Simon Browne, Joseph Boyse of Dublin, Thomas Cartwright the learned Puritan, and Samuel Chandler. The only doubt I have ever heard suggested is whether there should have been an article of Dr. Amory. But I was convinced, and am still convinced, that he was entitled to one, from the reality of his learning, and the excellent and candid nature of his practical writings.

"The new lives of clergymen of the church of England, in the same

sophers held that all deviations from right reason were madness; and whoever wishes to see the opinions both of ancients and moderns upon this subject, collected and illustrated with a variety of curious facts, may read Dr. Arnold's very entertaining work<sup>o</sup>.

Johnson said, "A madman loves to be with people whom he fears; not as a dog fears the lash; but of whom he stands in awe." I was struck with the justice of this observation. To be with those of whom a person whose mind is wavering and dejected stands in awe represses and composes an uneasy tumult of spirits<sup>1</sup>, and consoles him with the contemplation of something steady, and at least comparatively great.

He added, "Madmen are all sensual in the lower stages of the distemper. They are eager for gratifications to sooth their minds, and divert their attention from the misery which they suffer: but when they grow very ill, pleasure is too weak

four volumes, are as follows: John Balguy, Edward Bentham, George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne, William Herriman, Thomas Birch, William Borlase, Thomas Bott, James Bradley, Thomas Broughton, John Brown, John Burton, Joseph Butler Bishop of Durham, Thomas Carte, Edmund Castell, Edmund Chishull, Charles Churchill, William Clarke, Robert Clayton Bishop of Clogher, John Conybeare Bishop of Bristol, George Costard, and Samuel Croxall.—I am not conscious (says Dr. Kippis) of any partiality in conducting the work. I would not willingly insert a Dissenting Minister that does not justly deserve to be noticed, or omit an established clergyman that does. At the same time, I shall not be deterred from introducing Dissenters into the Biographia, when I am satisfied that they are entitled to that distinction, from their writings, learning, and merit."

Let me add that the expression, "A friend to the Constitution in Church and State," was not meant by me as any reflection upon this Reverend Gentleman, as if he were an enemy to the political constitution of his country, as established at the revolution, but, from my steady and avowed predilection for a *Tory*, was quoted from "Johnson's Dictionary," where that distinction is so defined.

<sup>o</sup> "Observations on Insanity," by Thomas Arnold, M.D. London, 1782.

<sup>1</sup> [Cardan composed his mind, tending to madness, (or rather actually mad, for such he seems in his writings, learned as they are), by exciting voluntary pain. V. Card. Op. et Vit. K.]

for them, and they seek for pain<sup>2</sup>. Employment, sir, and hardships, prevent melancholy. I suppose in all our army in America there was not one man who went mad."

We entered seriously upon a question of much importance to me, which Johnson was pleased to consider with friendly attention. I had long complained to him that I felt myself discontented in Scotland, as too narrow a sphere, and that I wished to make my chief residence in London, the great scene of ambition, instruction, and amusement: a scene which was to me, comparatively speaking, a heaven upon earth. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, I never knew any man who had such a *gust* for London as you have; and I cannot blame you for your wish to live there: yet, sir, were I in your father's place, I should not consent to your settling there; for I have the old feudal notions, and I should be afraid that Auchinleck would be deserted, as you would soon find it more desirable to have a country seat in a better climate. I own, however, that to consider it as a *duty* to reside on a family estate is a prejudice; for we must consider that working people get employment equally, and the produce of land is sold equally, whether a great family resides at home or not; and if the rents of an estate be car-

<sup>2</sup> We read in the Gospels, that those unfortunate persons who were possessed with evil spirits (which, after all, I think is the most probable cause of madness, as was first suggested to me by my respectable friend Sir John Pringle), had recourse to pain, tearing themselves and jumping sometimes into the fire, sometimes into the water. Mr. Seward has furnished me with a remarkable anecdote in confirmation of Dr. Johnson's observation. A tradesman who had acquired a large fortune in London retired from business, and went to live at Worcester. His mind, being without its usual occupation, and having nothing else to supply its place, preyed upon itself so that existence was a torment to him. At last he was seized with the stone; and a friend who found him in one of its severest fits, having expressed his concern, "No, no, sir (said he), don't pity me; what I now feel is ease compared with that torture of mind from which it relieves me."



ried to London, they return again in the circulation of commerce; nay, sir, we must perhaps allow that carrying the rents to a distance is a good, because it contributes to that circulation. We must, however, allow that a well regulated great family may improve a neighbourhood in civility and elegance, and give an example of good order, virtue, and piety; and so its residence at home may be of much advantage. But if a great family be disorderly and vicious, its residence at home is very pernicious to a neighbourhood. There is not now the same inducement to live in the country as formerly; the pleasures of social life are much better enjoyed in town; and there is no longer in the country that power and influence in proprietors of land which they had in old times, and which made the country so agreeable to them. The Laird of Auchinleck now is not near so great a man as the Laird of Auchinleck was a hundred years ago."

I told him that one of my ancestors never went from home without being attended by thirty men on horseback: "Johnson's shrewdness and spirit of inquiry were exerted upon every occasion. "Pray (said he), how did your ancestor support his thirty men and thirty horses when he went at a distance from home, in an age when there was hardly any money in circulation?" I suggested the same difficulty to a friend who mentioned Douglas's going to the Holy Land with a numerous train of followers. Douglas could, no doubt, maintain followers enough while living upon his own lands, the produce of which supplied them with food; but he could not carry that food to the Holy Land; and as there was no commerce by which he could be supplied with money, how could he maintain them in foreign countries?

I suggested a doubt that if I were to reside in London, the exquisite zest with which I relished it in occasional visits might go off, and I might grow tired of it. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, sir, when a man is tired of London he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford."

To obviate his apprehension that by settling in London I might desert the seat of my ancestors, I assured him that I had old feudal principles to a degree of enthusiasm; and that I felt all the *dulcedo* of the *natale solum*. I reminded him that the Laird of Auchinleck had an elegant house, in front of which he could ride ten miles forward upon his own territories, upon which he had upwards of six hundred people attached to him; that the family seat was rich in natural romanick beauties of rock, wood, and water; and that in my "morn of life" I had appropriated the finest descriptions in the ancient Classicks to certain scenes there, which were thus associated in my mind. That when all this was considered, I should certainly pass a part of the year at home, and enjoy it the more from variety, and from bringing with me a share of the intellectual stores of the metropolis. He listened to all this, and kindly "hoped it might be as I now supposed."

He said, a country gentleman should bring his lady to visit London as soon as he can, that they may have agreeable topicks for conversation when they are by themselves.

As I meditated trying my fortune in Westminster Hall, our conversation turned upon the profession of the law in England. JOHNSON. "You must not indulge too sanguine hopes, should you be called to our bar. I was told by a very sensible lawyer that there are a great many

chances against any man's success in the profession of the law; the candidates are so numerous, and those who get large practice so few. He said, it was by no means true that a man of good parts and application is sure of having business, though he, indeed, allowed that if such a man could but appear in a few causes, his merit would be known, and he would get forward; but that the great risk was, that a man might pass half a life-time in the Courts, and never have an opportunity of showing his abilities<sup>3</sup>."

We talked of employment being absolutely necessary to preserve the mind from wearying and growing fretful, especially in those who have a tendency to melancholy; and I mentioned to him a saying which somebody had related of an American savage, who, when a European was expatiating on all the advantages of money, put this question: "Will it purchase *occupation*?" JOHNSON. "Depend upon it, sir, this saying is too refined for a savage. And, sir, money *will* purchase occupation; it will purchase all the conveniences of life; it will purchase variety of company; it will purchase all sorts of entertainment."

I talked to him of Forster's "Voyage to the South Seas," which pleased me; but I found he did not like it. "Sir (said he), there is a great affectation of fine writing in it." BOSWELL. "But he carries you along with him." JOHNSON. "No, sir; he does not carry *me* along with him: he leaves me behind him: or rather, indeed, he sets

<sup>3</sup> Now, at the distance of fifteen years since this conversation passed, the observation which I have had an opportunity of making in Westminster Hall has convinced me that, however true the opinion of Dr. Johnson's legal friend may have been some time ago, the same certainty of success cannot now be promised to the same display of merit. The reasons, however, of the rapid rise of some, and the disappointment of others equally respectable, are such as it might seem invidious to mention, and would require a longer detail than would be proper for this work.

me before him; for he makes me turn over many leaves at a time."

On Sunday, September 12, we went to the church of Ashbourne, which is one of the largest and most luminous that I have seen in any town of the same size. I felt great satisfaction in considering that I was supported in my fondness for solemn publick worship by the general concurrence and munificence of mankind.

Johnson and Taylor were so different from each other that I wondered at their preserving an intimacy. Their having been at school and college together might, in some degree, account for this; but Sir Joshua Reynolds has furnished me with a stronger reason; for Johnson mentioned to him that he had been told by Taylor he was to be his heir. I shall not take upon me to animadvert upon this; but certain it is that Johnson paid great attention to Taylor. He now, however, said to me. "Sir, I love him; but I do not love him more; my regard for him does not increase. As it is said in the Apocrypha, 'his talk is of bullocks'." I do not suppose he is very fond of my company. His habits are by no means sufficiently clerical: this he knows that I see; and no man likes to live under the eye of perpetual disapprobation."

I have no doubt that a good many sermons were composed for Taylor by Johnson. At this time I found upon his table, a part of one which he had newly begun to write: and *Concio pro Taylora* appears in one of his diaries. When to these circumstances we add the internal evidence from the power of thinking and style, in the collection which the Reverend Mr. Hayes had pub-

<sup>4</sup> Ecclesiasticus, chap. xxxviii. v. 25. The whole chapter may be read as an admirable illustration of the superiority of cultivated minds over the gross and illiterate.

lished, with the *significant* title of "*Sermons left for publication* by the Reverend John Taylor, LL. D." our conviction will be complete.

I, however, would not have it thought that Dr. Taylor, though he could not write like Johnson (as, indeed, who could)? did not sometimes compose sermons as good as those which we generally have from very respectable divines. He showed me one with notes on the margin in Johnson's hand-writing; and I was present when he read another to Johnson, that he might have his opinion of it, and Johnson said it was "very well." These, we may be sure, were not Johnson's; for he was above little arts or tricks of deception.

Johnson was by no means of opinion that every man of a learned profession should consider it as incumbent upon him, or as necessary to his credit, to appear as an authour. When in the ardour of ambition for literary fame, I regretted to him one day that an eminent Judge had nothing of it, and therefore would leave no perpetual monument of himself to posterity; "Alas, sir (said Johnson), what a mass of confusion should we have if every Bishop, and every Judge, every Lawyer, Physician, and Divine, were to write books."

I mentioned to Johnson a respectable person of a very strong mind, who had little of that tenderness which is common to human nature; as an instance of which, when I suggested to him that he should invite his son, who had been settled ten years in foreign parts, to come home and pay him a visit, his answer was, "No, no, let him mind his business." JOHNSON. "I do not agree with him, sir, in this. Getting money is not all a man's business: to cultivate kindness is a valuable part of the business of life."

In the evening, Johnson, being in very good spirits, entertained us with several characteristic portraits; I regret that any of them escaped my retention and diligence. I found from experience, that to collect my friend's conversation so as to exhibit it with any degree of its natural flavour, it was necessary to write it down without delay. To record his sayings, after some distance of time, was like preserving or pickling long-kept and faded fruits, or other vegetables, which, when in that state, have little or nothing of their taste when fresh.

I shall present my readers with a series of what I gathered this evening from the Johnsonian garden.

"My friend, the late Earl of Corke, had a great desire to maintain the literary character of his family: he was a genteel man, but did not keep up the dignity of his rank. He was so generally civil that nobody thanked him for it."

"Did we not hear so much said of Jack Wilkes, we should think more highly of his conversation. Jack has a great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman. But after hearing his name sounded from pole to pole as the phoenix of convivial felicity, we are disappointed in his company. He has always been *à me*: but I would do Jack a kindness rather than not. The contest is now over."

"Garrick's gaiety of conversation has delicacy and elegance: Foote makes you laugh more; but Foote has the air of a buffoon paid for entertaining the company. He, indeed, well deserves his hire."

"Colley Cibber once consulted me as to one of his birthday Odes, a long time before it was wanted. I objected very freely to several passages. Cibber lost patience, and would not read



This was most fallacious reasoning. I was sure, for once, that I had the best side of the argument. I boldly maintained the just distinction between a tragedian and a mere theatrical droll; between those who rouse our terror and pity and those who only make us laugh. "If (said I) Betterton and Foote were to walk into this room, you would respect Betterton much more than Foote." JOHNSON. "If Betterton were to walk into this room with Foote, Foote would soon drive him out of it. Foote, sir, *quatenus* Foote, has powers superior to them all."

On Monday, September 22, when at breakfast, I unguardedly said to Dr. Johnson, "I wish I saw you and Mrs. Macaulay together." He grew very angry; and, after a pause, while a cloud gathered on his brow, he burst out, "No, sir; you would not see us quarrel to make you sport. Don't you know that it is very uncivil to *pit* two people against one another?" Then, checking himself, and wishing to be more gentle, he added, "I do not say you should be hanged or drowned for this; but it is very uncivil." Dr. Taylor thought him in the wrong, and spoke to him privately of it; but I afterwards acknowledged to Johnson that I was to blame, for I candidly owned that I meant to express a desire to see a contest between Mrs. Macaulay and him; but then I knew how the contest would end; so that I was to see him triumph. JOHNSON. "Sir, you cannot be sure how a contest will end; and no man has a right to engage two people in a dispute by which their passions may be inflamed, and they may part with bitter resentment against each other. I would sooner keep company with a man from whom I must guard my pockets than with a man who contrives to bring me into dispute with somebody, that he may hear it. This



is the great fault of ——— (naming one of our friends), endeavouring to introduce a subject upon which he knows two people in the company differ." BOSWELL. "But he told me, sir, he does it for instruction." JOHNSON. "Whatever the motive be, sir, the man who does so does very wrong. He has no more right to instruct himself at such risk than he has to make two people fight a duel, that he may learn how to defend himself."

He found great fault with a gentleman of our acquaintance for keeping a bad table. "Sir (said he), when a man is invited to dinner, he is disappointed if he does not get something good. I advised Mrs. Thrale, who has no card parties at her house, to give sweetmeats, and such good things, in an evening, as are not commonly given; and she would find company enough come to her; for every body loves to have things which please the palate put in their way without trouble or preparation." Such was his attention to the *minutiæ* of life and manners.

He thus characterized the Duke of Devonshire, grandfather of the present representative of that very respectable family: "He was not a man of superiour abilities, but he was a man strictly faithful to his word. If, for instance, he had promised you an acorn, and none had grown that year in his woods, he would not have contented himself with that excuse: he would have sent to Denmark for it. So unconditional was he in keeping his word; so high as to the point of honour." This was a liberal testimony from the Tory Johnson to the virtue of a great Whig nobleman.

Mr. Burke's "Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol, on the affairs of America," being mentioned, Johnson censured the composition much, and he ridiculed the definition of a free government, *viz.* "For any practical purpose, it is what the people

think so<sup>b</sup>.”—“I will let the King of France govern me on those conditions (said he), for, it is to be governed just as I please.” And when Dr. Taylor talked of a girl being sent to a parish workhouse, and asked how much she could be obliged to work, “Why (said Johnson), as much as is reasonable: and what is that? as much as *she thinks* reasonable.”

Dr. Johnson obligingly proposed to carry me to see Islam, a romantick scene, now belonging to a family of the name of Port, but formerly the seat of the Congreves. I suppose it is well described in some of the Tours. Johnson described it distinctly and vividly, at which I could not but express to him my wonder; because, though my eyes, as he observed, were better than his, I could not by any means equal him in representing visible objects. I said, the difference between us in this respect was as that between a man who has a bad instrument, but plays well on it, and a man who has a good instrument, on which he can play very imperfectly.

I recollect a very fine amphitheatre, surrounded with hills covered with woods, and walks neatly formed along the side of a rocky steep; on the quarter next the house, with recesses under projections of rock, overshadowed with trees; in one of which recesses, we were told, Congreve wrote his “Old Bachelor.” We viewed a remarkable natural curiosity at Islam; two rivers bursting near each other from the rock, not from immediate springs, but after having run for many miles under ground. Plott, in his “History of Staffordshire,” gives an account of this curiosity; but Johnson would not believe it, though we had the attestation of the gardener, who said he had put in corks where the river *Manyfold* sinks into

<sup>b</sup> Edit. 2, p. 53.

<sup>c</sup> Page 89.

the ground, and had caught them in a net placed before one of the openings where the water bursts out. Indeed, such subterraneous courses of water are found in various parts of our globe.

Talking of Dr. Johnson's unwillingness to believe extraordinary things, I ventured to say, "Sir, you come near Hume's argument against miracles, 'That it is more probable witnesses should lie, or be mistaken, than that they should happen.'" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, Hume, taking the proposition simply, is right. But the Christian revelation is not proved by the miracles alone, but as connected with prophecies, and with the doctrines in confirmation of which the miracles were wrought."

He repeated his observation, that the differences among Christians are really of no consequence. "For instance (said he), if a Protestant objects to a Papist, 'You worship images;' the Papist can answer, 'I do not insist on your doing it; you may be a very good Papist without it: I do it only as a help to my devotion.'" I said, the great article of Christianity is the revelation of immortality. Johnson admitted it was.

In the evening, a gentleman farmer, who was on a visit to Dr. Taylor's, attempted to dispute with Johnson in favour of Mungo Campbell, who shot Alexander, Earl of Eglintoune, upon his having fallen when retreating from his Lordship; who he believed was about to seize his gun, as he had threatened to do. He said, he should have done just as Campbell did. JOHNSON. "Whoever would do as Campbell did deserves to be hanged; not that I could, as a juryman, have found him legally guilty of murder; but I am glad they found means to convict him." The

<sup>7</sup> See Plott's "History of Staffordshire," p. 88, and the authorities referred to by him.

gentleman farmer said, "A poor man has as much honour as a rich man; and Campbell had *that* to defend." Johnson exclaimed, "A poor man has no honour." The English yeoman, not dismayed, proceeded: "Lord Eglintoune was a damned fool to run on upon Campbell after being warned that Campbell would shoot him if he did." Johnson, who could not bear any thing like swearing, angrily replied, "He was *not* a *damned* fool: he only thought too well of Campbell. He did not believe Campbell would be such a *damned* scoundrel as to do so *damned* a thing." His emphasis on *damned*, accompanied with frowning looks, reproved his opponent's want of decorum in *his* presence.

Talking of the danger of being mortified by rejection when making approaches to the acquaintance of the great, I observed, "I am, however, generally for trying, 'Nothing venture, nothing have.'"  
JOHNSON. "Very true, sir; but I have always been more afraid of failing than hopeful of success." And, indeed, though he had all just respect for rank, no man ever less courted the favour of the great.

During this interview at Ashbourne, Johnson seemed to be more uniformly social, cheerful, and alert than I had almost ever seen him. He was prompt on great occasions and on small. Taylor, who praised every thing of his own to excess; in short, "whose geese were all swans," as the proverb says, expatiated on the excellence of his bull dog, which, he told us, was "perfectly well shaped." Johnson, after examining the animal attentively, thus repressed the vainglory of our host:—"No, sir, he is *not* well shaped; for there is not the quick transition from the thickness of the forepart to the *tenuity*—the thin part—behind,—which a bull dog ought to have." This



inert and sluggish mortal, took a long pole which was lying on a bank, and pushed down several parcels of this wreck with painful assiduity, while I stood quietly by, wondering to behold the sage thus curiously employed, and smiling with a humorous satisfaction each time when he carried his point. He worked till he was quite out of breath; and having found a large dead cat, so heavy that he could not move it after several efforts, "Come," said he (throwing down the pole), "*you* shall take it now;" which I accordingly did, and being a fresh man, soon made the cat tumble over the cascade. This may be laughed at as too trifling to record; but it is a small characteristic trait in the Flemish picture which I give of my friend, and in which, therefore, I mark the most minute particulars. And let it be remembered, that "*Æsop at play*" is one of the instructive apologues of antiquity.

I mentioned an old gentleman of our acquaintance whose memory was beginning to fail. JOHNSON. "There must be a diseased mind where there is a failure of memory at seventy. A man's head, sir, must be morbid if he fails so soon." My friend, being now himself sixty-eight, might think thus: but I imagine, that *threescore and ten*, the Psalmist's period of sound human life in later ages, may have a failure, though there be no disease in the constitution.

Talking of Rochester's Poems, he said, he had given them to Mr. Steevens to castrate<sup>s</sup> for the edition of the poets, to which he was to write Prefaces. Dr. Taylor (the only time I ever heard him say any thing witty)<sup>s</sup> observed, that "if Ro-

<sup>s</sup> [This was unnecessary, for it had been done in the early part of the present century, by Jacob Tonson. M.]

<sup>s</sup> I am told that Horace Earl of Orford has a collection of *Bons-Mots* by persons who never said but one.

chester had been castrated himself, his exceptionable poems would not have been written." I asked if Burnet had not given a good Life of Rochester. JOHNSON. "We have a good *Death*: there is not much *Life*." I asked whether Prior's poems were to be printed entire: Johnson said they were. I mentioned Lord Hailes's censure of Prior, in his Preface to a collection of "Sacred Poems," by various hands, published by him at Edinburgh a great many years ago, where he mentions "those impure tales which will be the eternal opprobrium of their ingenious authour." JOHNSON. "Sir, Lord Hailes has forgot. There is nothing in Prior that will excite to lewdness. If Lord Hailes thinks there is, he must be more combustible than other people." I instanced the tale of "Paùlo Purganti and his Wife." JOHNSON. "Sir, there is nothing there, but that his wife wanted to be kissed, when poor Paulo was out of pocket. No, sir, Prior is a lady's book. No lady is ashamed to have it standing in her library."

The hypochondriack disorder being mentioned, Dr. Johnson did not think it so common as I supposed. "Dr. Taylor (said he) is the same one day as another. Burke and Reynolds are the same. Beauclerk, except when in pain, is the same. I am not so myself; but this I do not mention commonly."

I complained of a wretched changefulness, so that I could not preserve, for any long continuance, the same views of any thing. It was most comfortable to me to experience, in Dr. Johnson's company, a relief from this uneasiness. His steady vigorous mind held firm before me those objects which my own feeble and tremulous imagination frequently presented in such a wavering state, that my reason could not judge well of them.

Dr. Johnson advised me to-day to have as many books about me as I could; that I might read upon any subject upon which I had a desire for instruction at the time. "What you read *then* (said he) you will remember; but if you have not a book immediately ready, and the subject moulds in your mind, it is a chance if you have again a desire to study it." He added, "If a man never has an eager desire for instruction, he should prescribe a task for himself. But it is better when a man reads from immediate inclination."

He repeated a good many lines of Horace's Odes while we were in the chaise; I remember particularly the Ode "*Eheu fugaces*."

He said, the dispute as to the comparative excellence of Homer or Virgil<sup>1</sup> was inaccurate. "We must consider (said he) whether Homer was not the greatest poet, though Virgil may have produced the finest poem<sup>2</sup>. Virgil was indebted to Homer for the whole invention of the structure of an epic poem, and for many of his beauties."

He told me, that Bacon was a favourite author with him; but he had never read his works till he was compiling the English Dictionary, in which, he said, I might see Bacon very often quoted. Mr. Seward recollects his having mentioned, that a Dictionary of the England Language might be compiled from Bacon's writings alone, and that he once had an intention of giving

<sup>1</sup> I am informed by Mr. Langton, that a great many years ago he was present when this question was agitated between Dr. Johnson and Mr. Burke; and, to use Johnson's phrase, they "talked their best;" Johnson for Homer, Burke for Virgil. It may well be supposed to have been one of the ablest and most brilliant contests that ever was exhibited. How much must we regret that it has not been preserved.

<sup>2</sup> [But where is the *inaccuracy*, if the admirers of Homer contend, that he was not only prior to Virgil in point of time, but superior in excellence? J. B.—O.]



an edition of Bacon, at least of his English works, and writing the Life of that great man. Had he executed this intention, there can be no doubt that he would have done it in a most masterly manner. Mallet's Life of Bacon has no inconsiderable merit as an acute and elegant dissertation relative to its subject; but Mallet's mind was not comprehensive enough to embrace the vast extent of Lord Verulam's genius and research. Dr. Warburton therefore observed, with witty justness, "that Mallet, in his Life of Bacon, had forgotten that he was a philosopher; and if he should write the Life of the Duke of Marlborough, which he had undertaken to do, he would probably forget that he was a General."

Wishing to be satisfied what degree of truth there was in a story which a friend of Johnson's and mine had told me to his disadvantage, I mentioned it to him in direct terms; and it was to this effect: that a gentleman who had lived in great intimacy with him, shown him much kindness, and even relieved him from a spunging house, having afterwards fallen into bad circumstances, was one day, when Johnson was at dinner with him, seized for debt, and carried to prison; that Johnson sat still undisturbed, and went on eating and drinking; upon which the gentleman's sister, who was present, could not suppress her indignation: "What, sir (said she), are you so unfeeling as not even to offer to go to my brother in his distress; you who have been so much obliged to him?" And that Johnson answered, "Madam, I owe him no obligation; what he did for me he would have done for a dog."

Johnson assured me, that the story was absolutely false: but, like a man conscious of being in the right, and desirous of completely vindicating himself from such a charge, he did not arro-

gantly rest on a mere denial: and on his general character, but proceeded thus:—"Sir, I was very intimate with that gentleman, and was once relieved by him from an arrest; but I never was present when he was arrested, never knew that he was arrested, and I believe he never was in difficulties after the time when he relieved me. I loved him much: yet, in talking of his general character, I may have said, though I do not remember that I ever did say so, that as his generosity proceeded from no principle, but was a part of his profusion, he would do for a dog what he would do for a friend: but I never applied this remark to any particular instance, and certainly not to his kindness to me. If a profuse man, who does not value his money, and gives a large sum to a whore, gives half as much, or an equally large sum to relieve a friend, it cannot be esteemed as virtue. This was all that I could say of that gentleman; and, if said at all, it must have been said after his death. Sir, I would have gone to the world's end to relieve him. The remark about the dog, if made by me, was such a sally as might escape one when painting a man highly."

On Tuesday, September 23, Johnson was remarkably cordial to me. It being necessary for me to return to Scotland soon, I had fixed on the next day for my setting out, and I felt a tender concern at the thought of parting with him. He had, at this time, frankly communicated to me many particulars, which are inserted in this work in their proper places; and once, when I happened to mention that the expense of my jaunt would come to much more than I had computed, he said, "Why, sir, if the expense were to be an inconvenience, you would have reason to regret it: but, if you have had the money to spend, I

know not that you could have purchased as much pleasure with it in any other way."

During this interview at Ashbourne, Johnson and I frequently talked with wonderful pleasure of mere trifles which had occurred in our tour to the Hebrides; for it had left a most agreeable and lasting impression upon his mind.

He found fault with me for using the phrase to *make money*. "Don't you see (said he), the impropriety of it? To *make money* is to *coin* it: you should say *get money*." The phrase, however, is, I think, pretty current. But Johnson was at all times jealous of infractions upon the genuine English Language, and prompt to repress colloquial barbarisms; such as *pledging myself*, for *undertaking*; *line* for *department* or *branch*, as the *civil line*, the *banking line*. He was particularly indignant against the almost universal use of the word *idea* in the sense of *notion* or *opinion*, when it is clear that *idea* can only signify something of which an image can be formed in the mind. We may have an *idea* or *image* of a mountain, a tree, a building; but we cannot surely have an *idea* or *image* of an *argument* or *proposition*. Yet we hear the sages of the law "delivering their *ideas* upon the question under consideration;" and the first speakers in parliament "entirely coinciding in the *idea* which has been ably stated by an honourable member;"—or "reprobating an *idea* unconstitutional, and fraught with the most dangerous consequences to a great and free country." Johnson called this "modern cant."

I perceived that he pronounced the word *heard*, as if spelt with a double *c*, *heer*d, instead of sounding it *her*d, as is most usually done<sup>1</sup>. He said his reason was, that if it were pronounced *her*d,

<sup>1</sup> [In the age of Queen Elizabeth this word was frequently written, as doubtless it was pronounced, *heerd*. M.]

there would be a single exception from the English pronunciation of the syllable *ear*, and he thought it better not to have that exception.

He praised Grainger's "Ode on Solitude," in Dodsley's collection, and repeated, with great energy, the exordium:

"O Solitude, romantick maid,  
Whether by nodding towers you tread;  
Or haunt the desert's trackless gloom,  
Or hoyer o'er the yawning tomb;  
Or climb the Andes' cliffed side,  
Or by the Nile's coy source abide;  
Or, starting from your half-year's sleep,  
From Hecla view the thawing deep;  
Or, at the purple dawn of day,  
Tadmor's marble waste survey."

observing, "This, sir, is very noble."

In the evening our gentleman-farmer and two others entertained themselves and the company with a great number of tunes on the fiddle.—Johnson desired to have "Let ambition fire thy mind" played over again, and appeared to give a patient attention to it; though he owned to me that he was very insensible to the power of musick. I told him that it affected me to such a degree as often to agitate my nerves painfully, producing in my mind alternate sensations of pathetick dejection, so that I was ready to shed tears; and of daring resolution; so that I was inclined to rush into the thickest part of the battle. "Sir (said he), I should never hear it, if it made me such a fool."

Much of the effect of musick, I am satisfied, is owing to the association of ideas. That air, which instantly and irresistibly excites in the Swiss, when in a foreign land, the *maladie du pays*, has, I am told, no intrinsick power of sound. And I know from my own experience that Scotch reels; though brisk, make me melancholy, because I used to hear them in my early years, at

a time when Mr. Pitt called for soldiers "from the mountains of the north," and numbers of brave Highlanders were going abroad, never to return. Whereas the airs in "The Beggar's Opera," many of which are very soft, never fail to render me gay, because they are associated with the warm sensations and high spirits of London.—This evening, while some of the tunes of ordinary composition were played with no great skill, my frame was agitated, and I was conscious of a generous attachment to Dr. Johnson, as my preceptor and friend, mixed with an affectionate regret that he was an old man, whom I should probably lose in a short time. I thought I could defend him at the point of my sword.—My reverence and affection for him were in full glow. I said to him, "My dear sir, we must meet every year, if you don't quarrel with me." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, you are more likely to quarrel with me than I with you. My regard for you is greater almost than I have words to express; but I do not choose to be always repeating it; write it down in the first leaf of your pocket-book, and never doubt of it again."

I talked to him of misery being "the doom of man," in this life, as displayed in his "Vanity of Human Wishes." Yet I observed that things were done upon the supposition of happiness; grand houses were built, fine gardens were made, splendid places of publick amusement were contrived, and crowded with company. JOHNSON. "Alas, sir, these are all only struggles for happiness. When I first entered Ranelagh, it gave an expansion and gay sensation to my mind, such as I never experienced any where else. But, as Xerxes wept when he viewed his immense army, and considered that not one of that great multitude would be alive a hundred years afterwards,

so it went to my heart to consider that there was not one in all that brilliant circle that was not afraid to go home and think; but that the thoughts of each individual there would be distressing when alone." This reflection was experimentally just. The feeling of languor<sup>4</sup>, which succeeds the animation of gaiety, is itself a very severe pain; and when the mind is then vacant, a thousand disappointments and vexations rush in and excruciate. Will not many even of my fairest readers allow this to be true?

I suggested, that being in love and flattered with hopes of success, or having some favourite scheme in view for the next day, might prevent that wretchedness of which we had been talking. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, it may sometimes be so as you suppose; but my conclusion is in general but too true."

While Johnson and I stood in calm conference by ourselves in Dr. Taylor's garden, at a pretty late hour in a serene autumn night, looking up to the heavens, I directed the discourse to the subject of a future state. My friend was in a placid and most benignant frame of mind. "Sir (said he), I do not imagine that all things will be made clear to us immediately after death, but that the ways of Providence will be explained to us very gradually." I ventured to ask him whether, although the words of some texts of Scripture seemed strong in support of the dreadful doctrine of an eternity of punishment, we might

<sup>4</sup> Pope mentions,

"Stretch'd on the rack of a too easy chair."

But I recollect a couplet quite apposite to my subject in "Virtue, an Ethic Epistle," a beautiful and instructive poem, by an anonymous writer, in 1768; who, treating of pleasure in excess, says,

"Till languor, suffering on the rack of bliss,  
Confess that man was never made for this."

not hope that the denunciation was figurative, and would not literally be executed. JOHNSON: "Sir, you are to consider the intention of punishment in a future state. We have no reason to be sure that we shall then be no longer liable to offend against God. We do not know that even the angels are quite in a state of security; nay, we know that some of them have fallen. It may therefore, perhaps, be necessary, in order to preserve both men and angels in a state of rectitude, that they should have continually before them the punishment of those who have deviated from it; but we may hope that by some other means a fall from rectitude may be prevented. Some of the texts of Scripture upon this subject are, as you observe, indeed strong; but they may admit of a mitigated interpretation." He talked to me upon this awful and delicate question in a gentle tone, and as if afraid to be decisive.

After supper I accompanied him to his apartment, and at my request he dictated to me an argument in favour of the negro who was then claiming his liberty, in an action in the Court of Session in Scotland. He had always been very zealous against slavery in every form, in which I with all deference thought that he discovered "a zeal without knowledge." Upon one occasion, when in company with some very grave men at Oxford, his toast was, "Here's to the next insurrection of the negroes in the West Indies." His violent prejudice against our West Indian and American settlers appeared whenever there was an opportunity. Towards the conclusion of his "Taxation no Tyranny," he says, "how is it that we hear the loudest *yelps* for liberty among the drivers of negroes?" and in his conversation with Mr. Wilkes<sup>5</sup> he asked, "Where did Beckford

<sup>5</sup> See ante, p. 74.

and Trecothick learn English? That Trecothick could both speak and write good English is well known. I myself was favoured with his correspondence concerning the brave Corsicans. And that Beckford could speak it with a spirit of honest resolution even to his Majesty, as his "faithful Lord Mayor of London," is commemorated by the noble monument erected to him in Guildhall.

The argument dictated by Dr. Johnson was as follows:

"It must be agreed that in most ages many countries have had part of their inhabitants in a state of slavery; yet it may be doubted whether slavery can ever be supposed the natural condition of man. It is impossible not to conceive that men in their original state were equal; and very difficult to imagine how one would be subjected to another but by violent compulsion. An individual may, indeed, forfeit his liberty by a crime; but he cannot by that crime forfeit the liberty of his children. What is true of a criminal seems true likewise of a captive. A man may accept life from a conquering enemy on condition of perpetual servitude; but it is very doubtful whether he can entail that servitude on his descendants; for no man can stipulate without commission for another. The condition which he himself accepts, his son or grandson, perhaps would have rejected. If we should admit, what perhaps may with more reason be denied, that there are certain relations between man and man which may make slavery necessary and just, yet it can never be proved that he who is now suing for his freedom ever stood in any of those relations. He is certainly subject by no law, but that of violence, to his present master; who pretends no claim to his obedience, but that he



bought him from a merchant of slaves, whose right to sell him never was examined. It is said that according to the constitutions of Jamaica he was legally enslaved; these constitutions are merely positive; and apparently injurious to the rights of mankind, because whoever is exposed to sale is condemned to slavery without appeal; by whatever fraud or violence he might have been originally brought into the merchant's power.—In our own time Princes have been sold, by wretches to whose care they were entrusted, that they might have a European education; but when once they were brought to a market in the plantations, little would avail either their dignity or their wrongs. The laws of Jamaica afford a Negro no redress. His colour is considered as a sufficient testimony against him. It is to be lamented that moral right should ever give way to political convenience. But if temptations of interest are sometimes too strong for human virtue, let us at least retain a virtue where there is no temptation to quit it. In the present case there is apparent right on one side, and no convenience on the other. Inhabitants of this island can neither gain riches nor power by taking away the liberty of any part of the human species.—The sum of the argument is this:—No man is by nature the property of another: The defendant is, therefore, by nature free: The rights of nature must be some way forfeited before they can be justly taken away: That the defendant has by any act forfeited the rights of nature we require to be proved; and if no proof of such forfeiture can be given, we doubt not but the justice of the court will declare him free.”

I record Dr. Johnson's argument fairly upon this particular case; where, perhaps, he was in

the right. But I beg leave to enter my most solemn protest against his general doctrine with respect to the *Slave Trade*. For I will resolutely say—that his unfavourable notion of it was owing to prejudice, and imperfect or false information. The wild and dangerous attempt which has for some time been persisted in to obtain an act of our Legislature, to abolish so very important and necessary a branch of commercial interest, must have been crushed at once, had not the insignificance of the zealots, who vainly took the lead in it, made the vast body of Planters, Merchants, and others, whose immense properties are involved in that trade, reasonably enough suppose that there could be no danger. The encouragement which the attempt has received excites my wonder and indignation; and though some men of superiour abilities have supported it—whether from a love of temporary popularity when prosperous, or a love of general mischief when desperate,—my opinion is unshaken. To abolish a *status*, which in all ages God has sanctioned and man has continued, would not only be *robbery* to an innumerable class of our fellow subjects; but it would be extreme cruelty to the African Savages, a portion of whom it saves from massacre or intolerable bondage in their own country, and introduces into a much happier state of life; especially now when their passage to the West Indies and their treatment there is humanely regulated. To abolish that trade would be to

“—— shut the gates of mercy on mankind.”

Whatever may have passed elsewhere concerning it, The House of Lords is wise and independent:

*Intiminatis fulget honoribus;  
Nec sumit aut ponit secures  
Arbitrio popularis auræ.*

I have read, conversed, and thought much upon the subject, and would recommend to all who are capable of conviction an excellent Tract by my learned and ingenious friend John Ranby, Esq. entitled "Doubts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade." To Mr. Ranby's "Doubts," I will apply Lord Chancellor Hardwicke's expression in praise of a Scotch Law Book, called "Dirleton's Doubts;" "*HIS Doubts* (said his Lordship) are better than most people's *Certainties*."

When I said now to Johnson, that I was afraid I kept him too late up, "No, sir (said he), I don't care though I sit all night with you." This was an animated speech from a man in his sixty-ninth year.

Had I been as attentive not to displease him as I ought to have been, I know not but this vigil might have been fulfilled; but I unluckily entered upon the controversy concerning the right of Great Britain to tax America, and attempted to argue in favour of our fellow subjects on the other side of the Atlantick. I insisted that America might be very well governed, and made to yield sufficient revenue by the means of *influence*, as exemplified in Ireland, while the people might be pleased with the imagination of their participating of the British constitution, by having a body of representatives, without whose consent money could not be exacted from them. Johnson could not bear my thus opposing his avowed opinion, which he had exerted himself with an extreme degree of heat to enforce; and the violent agitation into which he was thrown, while answering, or rather reprimanding me, alarmed me so that I heartily repented of my having unthinkingly introduced the subject. I myself, however, grew warm, and the change was great, from the calm state of philosophical dis-

cussion in which we had a little before been pleasingly employed: . . . . .

I talked of the Corruption of the British Parliament, in which I alleged that any question; however unreasonable or unjust; might be carried by a venal majority; and I spoke with high admiration of the Roman Senate, as if composed of men sincerely desirous to solve what they should think best for their country. My friend would allow no such character to the Roman Senate; and he maintained that the British Parliament was not corrupt, and that there was no occasion to corrupt its members; asserting that there was hardly ever any question of great importance before Parliament, any question in which a man might not very well vote either upon one side or the other. He said there had been none in his time except that respecting America.

We were fatigued by the contest, which was produced by my want of caution; and he was not then in the humour to slide into easy and cheerful talk. It therefore so happened that we were after an hour or two very willing to separate and go to bed.

On Wednesday, September 24, I went into Dr. Johnson's room before he got up, and finding that the storm of the preceding night was quite laid, I sat down upon his bed side, and he talked with as much readiness and good humour as ever. He recommended to me to plant a considerable part of a large moorish farm which I had purchased, and he made several calculations of the expense and profit; for he delighted in exercising his mind on the science of numbers. He pressed upon me the importance of planting at the first in a very sufficient manner, quoting the saying, "*In bello non licet bis errare.*" and adding; "this is equally true in planting."

I spoke with gratitude of Dr. Taylor's hospitality; and as evidence that it was not on account of his good table alone that Johnson visited him often, I mentioned a little anecdote which had escaped my friend's recollection, and at hearing which repeated he smiled. One evening, when I was sitting with him, Frank delivered this message: "Sir, Dr. Taylor sends his compliments to you, and begs you will dine with him to-morrow. He has got a hare."—"My compliments (said Johnson), and I'll dine with him—hare or rabbit."

After breakfast I departed, and pursued my journey northwards. I took my postchaise from the Green Man, a very good inn at Ashbourne, the mistress of which, a mighty civil gentlewoman, courtesying very low, presented me with an engraving of the sign of her house; to which she had subjoined, in her own hand writing, an address in such singular simplicity of style that I have preserved it pasted upon one of the boards of my original Journal at this time, and shall here insert it for the amusement of my readers:

*"M. KILLINGLEY'S duty waits upon Mr. Boswell, is exceedingly obliged to him for this favour; whenever he comes this way, hopes for a continuance of the same. Would Mr. Boswell name the house to his extensive acquaintance, it would be a singular favour conferr'd on one who has it not in her power to make any other return but her most grateful thanks, and sincerest prayers for his happiness in time, and in a blessed eternity.*

*"Tuesday morn."*

From this meeting at Ashbourne I derived a considerable accession to my Johnsonian store. I communicated my original Journal to Sir William Forbes, in whom I have always placed de-

served confidence; and what he wrote to me concerning it is so much to my credit as the biographer of Johnson that my readers will, I hope, grant me their indulgence for here inserting it: "It is not once or twice going over it (says Sir William) that will satisfy me; for I find in it a high degree of instruction as well as entertainment; and I derive more benefit from Dr. Johnson's admirable discussions than I should be able to draw from his personal conversation; for, I suppose there is not a man in the world to whom he discloses his sentiments so freely as to yourself."

I cannot omit a curious circumstance which occurred at Edensor Inn, close by Chatsworth, to survey the magnificence of which I had gone a considerable way out of my road to Scotland. The inn was then kept by a very jolly landlord, whose name, I think, was Malton. He happened to mention that "the celebrated Dr. Johnson had been in his house." I inquired *who* this Dr. Johnson was, that I might hear my host's notion of him. "Sir (said he), Johnson, the great writer; *Oddity*, as they call him. He's the greatest writer in England; he writes for the ministry; he has a correspondence abroad, and lets them know what's going on."

My friend, who had a thorough dependence upon the authenticity of my relation without any *embellishment*, as *falsehood* or *fiction* is too gently called, laughed a good deal at this representation of himself.

MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, Sept. 29, 1777.

"By the first post I inform you of my safe arrival at my own house, and that I had the comfort of finding my wife and children all in good health.

“When I look back upon our late interview, it appears to me to have answered expectation better than almost any scheme of happiness that I ever put in execution. My Journal is stored with wisdom and wit; and my memory is filled with the recollection of lively and affectionate feelings, which now, I think, yield me more satisfaction than at the time when they were first excited. I have experienced this upon other occasions. I shall be obliged to you if you will explain it to me; for it seems wonderful that pleasure should be more vivid at a distance than when near. I wish you may find yourself in a humour to do me this favour; but I flatter myself with no strong hope of it; for I have observed, that unless upon very serious occasions, your letters to me are not *answers* to those which I write.”

[I then expressed much uneasiness that I had mentioned to him the name of the gentleman who had told me the story so much to his disadvantage, the truth of which he had completely refuted; for that my having done so might be interpreted as a breach of confidence, and offend one whose society I valued:—therefore, earnestly requesting that no notice might be taken of it to any body till I should be in London, and have an opportunity to talk it over with the gentleman.]

“TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

“DEAR SIR,

“You will wonder, or you have wondered, why no letter has come from me. What you wrote at your return, had in it such a strain of cowardly caution as gave me no pleasure. I could not well do what you wished; I had no need to vex you with a refusal. I have seen Mr. ———,

and as to him have set all right, without any inconvenience, so far as I know, to you. Mrs. Thrale had forgot the story. You may now be at ease.

“And at ease I certainly wish you, for the kindness that you showed in coming so long a journey to see me. It was pity to keep you so long in pain, but, upon reviewing the matter, I do not see what I could have done better than I did.

“I hope you found at your return my dear enemy and all her little people quite well, and had no reason to repent of your journey. I think on it with great gratitude.

“I was not well when you left me at the Doctor's, and I grew worse; yet I staid on, and at Lichfield was very ill. Travelling, however, did not make me worse; and when I came to London, I complied with a summons to go to Bright-helmstone, where I saw Beauclerk, and staid three days.

“Our CLUB has recommenced last Friday, but I was not there. Langton has another wench<sup>6</sup>. Mrs. Thrale is in hopes of a young brewer. They got by their trade last year a very large sum, and their expenses are proportionate.

“Mrs. Williams's health is very bad. And I have had for some time a very difficult and laborious respiration; but I am better by purges, abstinence, and other methods. I am yet, however, much behindhand in my health and rest.

“Dr. Blair's sermons are now universally commended; but let him think that I had the honour of first finding and first praising his excellences. I did not stay to add my voice to that of the publick.

“My dear friend, let me thank you once more

<sup>6</sup> A daughter born to him.



for your visit; you did me great honour, and I hope met with nothing that displeased you. I staid long at Ashbourne, not much pleased, yet awkward at departing. I then went to Lichfield, where I found my friend at Stow Hill<sup>7</sup> very dangerously diseased. Such is life. Let us try to pass it well, whatever it be, for there is surely something beyond it.

"Well, now, I hope all is well. Write as soon as you can, to, DEAR SIR,

"Your affectionate servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"London Nov. 29, 1777."

"TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh. Nov. 29, 1777.

"THIS day's post has at length relieved me from much uneasiness, by bringing me a letter from you. I was, indeed, doubly uneasy;—on my own account and yours. I was very anxious to be secured against any bad consequences from my imprudence in mentioning the gentleman's name who had told me a story to your disadvantage; and as I could hardly suppose it possible, that you would delay so long to make me easy, unless you were ill, I was not a little apprehensive about you. You must not be offended when I venture to tell you that you appear to me to have been too rigid upon this occasion. The '*cowardly caution which gave you no pleasure*,' was suggested to me by a friend here, to whom I mentioned the strange story and the detection of its falsity, as an instance how one may be deceived by what is apparently very good authority. But, as I am still persuaded, that as I might have obtained the truth, without mentioning the gen-

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Aston.

tleman's name, it was wrong in me to do it, I cannot see that you are just in blaming my caution. But if you were ever so just in your disapprobation, might you not have dealt more tenderly with me?

"I went to Auchinleck about the middle of October, and passed some time with my father very comfortably.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I am engaged in a criminal prosecution against a country schoolmaster, for indecent behaviour to his female scholars. There is no statute against such abominable conduct; but it is punishable at common law. I shall be obliged to you for your assistance in this extraordinary trial.

"I ever am, MY DEAR SIR,

"Your faithful humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

About this time I wrote to Johnson, giving him an account of the decision of the *Negro cause* by the Court of Session, which by those who hold even the mildest and best regulated slavery in abomination (of which number I do not hesitate to declare that I am none), should be remembered with high respect, and to the credit of Scotland; for it went upon a much broader ground than the case of *Somerset*, which was decided in England; being truly the general question, whether a perpetual obligation of service to one master in any mode should be sanctioned by the law of a free country. A negro, then called *Joseph Knight*, a native of Africa, having been brought to Jamaica in the usual course of the slave trade, and purchased by a Scotch gentleman in that island, had attended his master to

\* See State Trials, vol. xi. p. 339, and Mr. Hargrave's argument.



tained the lawfulness of a *status*, which has been acknowledged in all ages and countries, and that when freedom flourished, as in old Greece and Rome.

“ TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ THIS is the time of the year in which all express their good wishes to their friends; and I send mine to you and your family. May your lives be long, happy, and good! I have been much out of order, but, I hope, do not grow worse.

“ The crime of the schoolmaster whom you are engaged to prosecute is very great, and may be suspected to be too common. In our law it would be a breach of the peace and a misdemeanour: that is, a kind of indefinite crime, not capital, but punishable at the discretion of the Court. You cannot want matter: all that needs to be said will easily occur.

“ Mr. Shaw, the authour of the Gaelick Grammar, desires me to make a request for him to Lord Eglintoune, that he may be appointed Chaplain to one of the new raised regiments.

“ All our friends are as they were; little has happened to them of either good or bad. Mrs. Thrale ran a great black hair dressing pin into her eye; but by great evacuation she kept it from inflaming, and it is almost well. Miss Reynolds has been out of order, but is better. Mrs. Williams is in a very poor state of health.

“ If I should write on, I should, perhaps, write only complaints, and therefore I will content myself with telling you, that I love to think on you and to hear from you; and that I am,

“ DEAR SIR,

“ Yours faithfully,

“ December 27, 1777.”

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

" TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

" DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, Jan. 8, 1778.

" YOUR congratulations upon a new year are mixed with complaint: mine must be so too. My wife has for some time been very ill, having been confined to the house these three months by a severe cold, attended with alarming symptoms.

[Here I gave a particular account of the distress which the person, upon every account most dear to me, suffered; and of the dismal state of apprehension in which I now was: adding that I never stood more in need of his consoling philosophy.]

" Did you ever look at a book written by Wilson, a Scotchman, under the Latin name of *Volusenus*, according to the custom of literary men at a certain period? It is entitled '*De Animi Tranquillitate*.' I earnestly desire tranquillity. *Bona res quies*; but I fear I shall never attain it: for, when unoccupied, I grow gloomy, and occupation agitates me to feverishness.

\* \* \* \* \*

" I am, DEAR SIR,

" Your most affectionate humble servant,  
" JAMES BOSWELL."

" TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" DEAR SIR,

" To a letter so interesting as your last, it is proper to return some answer, however little I may be disposed to write.

" Your alarm at your lady's illness was reasonable, and not disproportionate to the appearance of the disorder. I hope your physical friend's conjecture is now verified, and all fear of a con-

sumption at an end: a little care and exercise will then restore her. London is a good air for ladies; and if you bring her hither, I will do for her what she did for me—I will retire from my apartments for her accommodation. Behave kindly to her, and keep her cheerful.

“You always seem to call for tenderness. Know then, that in the first month of the present year I very highly esteem and very cordially love you. I hope to tell you this at the beginning of every year as long as we live; and why should we trouble ourselves to tell or hear it oftener?

“Tell Veronica, Euphemia, and Alexander, that I wish them, as well as their parents, many happy years.

“You have ended the negro’s cause much to my mind. Lord Auchinleck and dear Lord Hailes were on the side of liberty. Lord Hailes’s name reproaches me; but if he saw my languid neglect of my own affairs, he would rather pity than resent my neglect of his. I hope to mend, *ut et mihi vivam et amicis.*

“I am, DEAR SIR,

“Yours affectionately,

“January 24, 1778.

“SAM. JOHNSON.

“My service to my fellow traveller, Joseph.”

Johnson maintained a long and intimate friendship with Mr. Welch, who succeeded the celebrated Henry Fielding as one of his Majesty’s Justices of the Peace for Westminster; kept a regular office for the police of that great district; and discharged his important trust, for many years, faithfully and ably. Johnson, who had an eager and unceasing curiosity to know human life in all its variety, told me, that he attended Mr. Welch in his office for a whole winter, to

hear the examinations of the culprits; but that he found an almost uniform tenor of misfortune, wretchedness, and profligacy. Mr. Welch's health being impaired, he was advised to try the effect of a warm climate; and Johnson, by his interest with Mr. Chamier, procured him leave of absence to go to Italy, and a promise that the pension or salary of two hundred pounds a year, which Government allowed him, should not be discontinued. Mr. Welch accordingly went abroad, accompanied by his daughter Anne, a young lady of uncommon talents and literature.

.. "TO SAUNDERS WELCH, ESQ. AT THE ENGLISH  
COFFEE-HOUSE, ROME.

" DEAR SIR,

"To have suffered one of my best and dearest friends to pass almost two years in foreign countries without a letter has a very shameful appearance of inattention. But the truth is, that there was no particular time in which I had any thing particular to say; and general expressions of good will, I hope, our long friendship is grown too solid to want.

"Of publick affairs you have information from the newspapers wherever you go, for the English keep no secret; and of other things, Mrs. Nollens informs you. My intelligence could therefore be of no use; and Miss Nancy's letters made it unnecessary to write to you for information: I was likewise for some time out of humour to find that motion, and nearer approaches to the sun, did not restore your health so fast as I expected. Of your health, the accounts have lately been more pleasing; and I have the gratification of imaging to myself a length of years which I hope you have gained, and of which the enjoy-

ment will be improved by a vast accession of images and observations which your journeys and various residence have enabled you to make and accumulate. You have travelled with this felicity; almost peculiar to yourself, that your companion is not to part from you at your journey's end; but you are to live on together to help each other's recollection, and to supply each other's omissions. The world has few greater pleasures than that which two friends enjoy, in tracing back, at some distant time, those transactions and events through which they have passed together. One of the old man's miseries is, that he cannot easily find a companion able to partake with him of the past. You and your fellow traveller have this comfort in store, that your conversation will be not easily exhausted; one will always be glad to say what the other will always be willing to hear.

"That you may enjoy this pleasure long, your health must have your constant attention. I suppose you propose to return this year. There is no need of haste: do not come hither before the height of summer, that you may fall gradually into the inconveniences of your native clime. July seems to be the proper month. August and September will prepare you for the winter. After having travelled so far to find health, you must take care not to lose it at home; and I hope a little care will effectually preserve it.

"Miss Nancy has doubtless kept a constant and copious journal. She must not expect to be welcome when she returns, without a great mass of information. Let her review her journal often, and set down what she finds herself to have omitted, that she may trust to memory as little as possible, for memory is soon confused by a quick succession of things; and she will grow



every day less confident of the truth of her own narratives, unless she can recur to some written memorials. If she has satisfied herself with hints, instead of full representations, let her supply the deficiencies now while her memory is yet fresh, and while her father's memory may help her. If she observes this direction, she will not have travelled in vain; for she will bring home a book with which she may entertain herself to the end of life. If it were not now too late, I would advise her to note the impression which the first sight of any thing new and wonderful made upon her mind. Let her now set her thoughts down as she can recollect them; for faint as they may already be, they will grow every day fainter.

"Perhaps I do not flatter myself unreasonably when I imagine that you may wish to know something of me. I can gratify your benevolence with no account of health. The hand of time, or of disease is very heavy upon me. I pass restless and uneasy nights, harassed with convulsions of my breast, and flatulencies at my stomach; and restless nights make heavy days. But nothing will be mended by complaints, and therefore I will make an end. When we meet we will try to forget our cares and our maladies, and contribute, as we can, to the cheerfulness of each other. If I had gone with you, I believe I should have been better; but I do not know that it was in my power.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Feb. 3, 1778."

This letter, while it gives admirable advice how to travel to the best advantage, and will therefore be of very general use, is another emi-

ment proof of Johnson's warm and affectionate heart'.

" TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

" MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, Feb. 26, 1778.

" WHY I have delayed, for near a month, to thank you for your last affectionate letter, I cannot say; for my mind has been in better health these three weeks than for some years past. I believe I have evaded till I could send you a copy of Lord Hailes's opinion on the negro's cause, which he wishes you to read, and correct any errors that there may be in the language; for (says he), 'we live in a critical, though not a learned age; and I seek to screen myself under the shield of Ajax.' I communicated to him your apology for keeping the sheets of his 'Annals' so long. He says, 'I am sorry to see that Dr. Johnson is in a state of languor. Why should a sober Christian, neither an enthusiast nor a fanatic, be very merry or very sad?' I envy his Lordship's comfortable constitution; but well do I know that languor and dejection will afflict the best, however excellent their principles. I am in possession of Lord Hailes's opinion in his own handwriting, and have had it for some time. My excuse then for procrastination must be, that I wanted to have it copied; and I have now put that off so long that it will be better to bring it with me than to send it, as I shall probably get you to look at it sooner, when I solicit you in person.

" My wife, who is, I thank God, a good deal

\* The friendship between Mr. Welch and him was unbroken. Mr. Welch died not many months before him, and bequeathed him five guineas for a ring, which Johnson received with tenderness, as a kind memorial. His regard was constant for his friend Mr. Welch's daughters; of whom, Jane is married to Mr. Nollokens, the statuary, whose merit is too well known to require any praise from me.

better, is much obliged to you for your very polite and courteous offer of your apartment; but, if she goes to London, it will be best for her to have lodgings in the more airy vicinity of Hyde Park. I, however, doubt much if I shall be able to prevail with her to accompany me to the metropolis; for she is so different from you and me that she dislikes travelling; and she is so anxious about her children that she thinks she should be unhappy if at a distance from them. She, therefore wishes rather to go to some country place in Scotland, where she can have them with her.

"I purpose being in London about the 20th of of next month, as I think it creditable to appear in the House of Lords as one of Douglas's Counsel, in the great and last competition between Duke Hamilton and him.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I am sorry poor Mrs. Williams is so ill: though her temper is unpleasant, she has always been polite and obliging to me. I wish many happy years to good Mr. Levett, who, I suppose, holds his usual place at your breakfast table".

"I ever am, MY DEAR SIR,

"Your affectionate humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

TO THE SAME.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, Feb. 28, 1778.

"You are at present busy amongst the English poets, preparing, for the public instruction and

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Percy, the Bishop of Dromore, humorously observed, that Levett used to breakfast on the crust of a roll, which Johnson, after tearing out the crum for himself, threw to his humble friend.

[Perhaps the word *threw* is here too strong. Dr. Johnson never treated Levett with contempt; it is clear, indeed, from various circumstances that he had great kindness for him. I have often seen Johnson at breakfast, accompanied, or rather attended, by Levett, who had always the management of the tea kettle. M.]

entertainment, Prefaces, biographical and critical. It will not, therefore, be out of season to appeal to you for the decision of a controversy which has arisen between a lady and me concerning a passage in Parnell. That poet tells us, that his Hermit quitted his cell.

‘————— to know the world by sight,  
To find if *books* or *swains* report it right;  
(For yet by *swains alone* the world he know,  
Whose feet came wandering o’er the nightly dew).’

I maintain, that there is an inconsistency here; for as the Hermit’s notions of the world were formed from the reports both of *books* and *swains*, he could not justly be said to know by *swains alone*. Be pleased to judge between us, and let us have your reasons<sup>3</sup>.

“What do you say to ‘*Taxation no Tyranny*,’ now, after Lord North’s declaration, or confession, or whatever else his conciliatory speech should be called? I never differed from you in politicks but upon two points,—the Middlesex Election, and the Taxation of the Americans by the British *Houses of Representatives*. There is a *charm* in the word *Parliament*; so I avoid it. As I am a steady and a warm Tory, I regret that the King does not see it to be better for him to receive constitutional supplies from his American subjects by the voice of their own assemblies, where his Royal Person is represented, than through the medium of his British subjects. I am persuaded that the power of the Crown, which I wish to increase, would be greater when in contact with all its dominions than if ‘the rays of regal bounty’<sup>4</sup>, were ‘to shine’ upon America,

<sup>3</sup> [See this subject discussed in a subsequent page, under May 3, 1779. M.]

<sup>4</sup> Alluding to a line in his “Vanity of Human Wishes,” describing Cardinal Wolsey in his state of elevation:

“Through him the rays of regal bounty shine.”

through that dense and troubled body, a modern British Parliament. But, enough of this subject; for your angry voice at Ashbourne upon it still sounds awful 'in my mind's ears.'

"I ever am, MY DEAR SIR,

"Your most affectionate humble servant,  
"JAMES BOSWELL."

TO THE SAME.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, March 12, 1778.

"THE alarm of your late illness distressed me but a few hours; for on the evening of the day that it reached me, I found it contradicted in 'The London Chronicle,' which I could depend upon as authentick concerning you, Mr. Strahan being the printer of it. I did not see the paper in which 'the approaching extinction of a bright luminary' was announced. Sir William Forbes told me of it; and he says he saw me so uneasy that he did not give me the report in such strong terms as he read it. He afterwards sent me a letter from Mr. Langton to him, which relieved me much. I am, however, not quite easy, as I have not heard from you; and now I shall not have that comfort before I see you, for I set out for London to-morrow before the post comes in. I hope to be with you on Wednesday morning; and I ever am, with the highest veneration,

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Your most obliged, faithful,

"And affectionate, humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

On Wednesday, March 18, I arrived in London, and was informed by good Mr. Francis that his master was better, and was gone to Mr. Thrale's, at Streatham, to which place I wrote to him, beg-

ging to know when he would be in town. He was not expected for some time; but next day having called on Dr. Taylor, in Dean's Yard, Westminster, I found him there, and was told he had come to town for a few hours. He met me with his usual kindness, but instantly returned to the writing of something on which he was employed when I came in, and on which he seemed much intent. Finding him thus engaged, I made my visit very short, and had no more of his conversation, except his expressing a serious regret that a friend of ours was living at too much expense, considering how poor an appearance he made: "If (said he) a man has splendour from his expense, if he spends his money in pride or in pleasure, he has value: but if he lets others spend it for him, which is most commonly the case, he has no advantage from it."

On Friday, March 20, I found him at his own house, sitting with Mrs. Williams, and was informed that the room formerly allotted to me was now appropriated to a charitable purpose; Mrs. Desmoulins<sup>5</sup>, and I think her daughter, and a Miss Carmichael, being all lodged in it. Such was his humanity, and such his generosity, that Mrs. Desmoulins herself told me, he allowed her half a guinea a week. Let it be remembered, that this was above a twelfth part of his pension.

His liberality, indeed, was at all periods of his life very remarkable. Mr. Howard, of Lichfield, at whose father's house Johnson had in his early years been kindly received, told me, that when he was a boy at the Charter House, his father wrote to him to go and pay a visit to Mr. Samuel Johnson, which he accordingly did, and found him in an upper room of poor appearance. John-

<sup>5</sup> Daughter of Dr. Swinfen, Johnson's godfather, and widow of Mr. Desmoulins, a writing master.

son received him with much courteousness, and talked a great deal to him, as to a schoolboy, of the course of his education, and other particulars. When he afterwards came to know and understand the high character of this great man, he recollected his condescension with wonder. He added, that when he was going away, Mr. Johnson presented him with half a guinea; and this, said Mr. Howard, was at a time when he probably had not another.

We retired from Mrs. Williams to another room. Tom Davies soon after joined us. He had now unfortunately failed in his circumstances, and was much indebted to Dr. Johnson's kindness for obtaining for him many alleviations of his distress. After he went away, Johnson blamed his folly in quitting the stage, by which he and his wife got five hundred pounds a year. I said, I believed it was owing to Churchill's attack upon him,

"He mouths a sentence as ours mouth a bone."

JOHNSON. "I believe so too, sir. But what a man is he who is to be driven from the stage by a line? Another line would have driven him from his shop."

I told him that I was engaged as Counsel at the bar of the House of Commons to oppose a road bill in the county of Stirling, and asked him what mode he would advise me to follow in addressing such an audience. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, you must provide yourself with a good deal of extraneous matter, which you are to produce occasionally, so as to fill up the time; for you must consider that they do not listen much. If you begin with the strength of your cause it may be lost before they begin to listen. When you catch a moment of attention, press the merits of the ques-

tion upon them." He said, as to one point of the merits, that he thought "it would be a wrong thing to deprive the small landholders of the privilege of assessing themselves for making and repairing the high roads; *it was destroying a certain portion of liberty without a good reason, which was always a bad thing.*" When I mentioned this observation next day to Mr. Wilkes, he pleasantly said, "What! does *he* talk of liberty? *Liberty* is as ridiculous in *his* mouth as *Religion* in *mine.*" Mr. Wilkes's advice as to the best mode of speaking at the bar of the House of Commons was not more respectful towards the senate than that of Dr. Johnson. "Be as impudent as you can, as merry as you can, and say whatever comes uppermost. Jack Lee is the best heard there of any Counsel; and he is the most impudent dog, and always abusing us."

In my interview with Dr. Johnson this evening I was quite easy, quite as his companion; upon which I find in my Journal the following reflection: "So ready is my mind to suggest matter for dissatisfaction that I felt a sort of regret that I was so easy. I missed that awful reverence with which I used to contemplate MR. SAMUEL JOHNSON, in the complex magnitude of his literary, moral, and religious character. I have a wonderful superstitious love of *mystery*; when, perhaps, the truth is, that it is owing to the cloudy darkness of my own mind. I should be glad that I am more advanced in my progress of being, so that I can view Dr. Johnson with a steadier and clearer eye. My dissatisfaction to-night was foolish. Would it not be foolish to regret that we shall have less mystery in a future state? That 'we now see in a glass darkly,' but shall 'then see face to face?'"—This reflection, which I thus freely communicate, will be valued by the



thinking part of my readers, who may have themselves experienced a similar state of mind.

He returned next day to Streatham, to Mr. Thrale's; where, as Mr. Strahan once complained to me, "he was in a great measure absorbed from the society of his old friends." I was kept in London by business, and wrote to him on the 27th, that a separation from him for a week; when we were so near, was equal to a separation for a year when we were at four hundred miles distance. I went to Streatham on Monday, March 30. Before he appeared, Mrs. Thrale made a very characteristical remark:—"I do not know for certain what will please Dr. Johnson: but I know for certain that it will displease him to praise any thing, even what he likes, extravagantly."

At dinner he laughed at querulous declamations against the age, on account of luxury,—increase of London,—scarcity of provisions,—and other such topics. "Houses (said he) will be built till rents fall; and corn is more plentiful now than ever it was."

I had before dinner repeated a ridiculous story told me by an old man who had been a passenger with me in the stage coach to-day. Mrs. Thrale, having taken occasion to allude to it in talking to me, called it "The story told you by the old *woman*."—"Now, madam (said I), give me leave to catch you in the fact; it was not an old *woman*, but an old *man* whom I mentioned as having told me this." I presumed to take an opportunity, in presence of Johnson, of showing this lively lady how ready she was, unintentionally, to deviate from exact authenticity of narration.

Thomas à Kempis (he observed) must be a good book, as the world has opened its arms to receive it. It is said to have been printed, in one

language or other, as many times as there have been months since it first came out<sup>6</sup>. I always was struck with this sentence in it: "Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be."

He said, "I was angry with Hurd about Cowley, for having published a selection of his works: but, upon better consideration, I think there is no impropriety in a man's publishing as much as he chooses of any authour; if he does not put the rest out of the way. A man, for instance, may print the Odes of Horace alone." He seemed to be in a more indulgent humour than when this subject was discussed between him and Mr. Murphy.

When we were at tea and coffee, there came in Lord Trimlestown, in whose family was an ancient Irish peerage, but it suffered by taking the generous side in the troubles of the last century<sup>7</sup>. He was a man of pleasing conversation, and was accompanied by a young gentleman, his son.

I mentioned that I had in my possession the Life of Sir Robert Sibbald, the celebrated Scottish antiquary, and founder of the Royal College of Physicians at Edinburgh, in the original manuscript in his own hand writing; and that it was, I believed, the most natural and candid account of himself that ever was given by any man. As an instance, he tells that the Duke of Perth, then

<sup>6</sup> [The first edition was in 1492. Between that period and 1792, according to this account, there were three thousand six hundred editions. But this is very improbable. M.]

<sup>7</sup> [The original passage is: *Si non potes te talem facere, qualem vis, quomodo poteris alium ad tuum habere beneplacitum?* De Imit. Christ. Lib. i. Cap. xvi. J. B.—O.]

<sup>8</sup> [Since this was written, the attainder has been reversed; and Nicholas Barnwall is now a peer of Ireland with this title. The person mentioned in the text had studied physick, and prescribed gratis to the poor. Hence arose the subsequent conversation. M.]

Chaucellor of Scotland, pressed him very much to come over to the Roman Catholick faith: that he resisted all his Grace's arguments for a considerable time, till one day he felt himself, as it were, instantaneously convinced, and with tears in his eyes ran into the Duke's arms, and embraced the ancient religion; that he continued very steady in it for some time, and accompanied his Grace to London one winter, and lived in his household; that there he found the rigid fasting prescribed by the church very severe upon him; that this disposed him to reconsider the controversy, and having then seen that he was in the wrong, he returned to Protestantism. I talked of some time or other publishing this curious life. MRS. THRALE. "I think you had as well let alone that publication. To discover such weakness exposes a man when he is gone." JOHNSON. "Nay, it is an honest picture of human nature. How often are the primary motives of our greatest actions as small as Sibbald's for his reconversion." MRS. THRALE. "But may they not as well be forgotten?" JOHNSON. "No, madam; a man loves to review his own mind. That is the use of a diary, or journal." LORD TRIMLESTOWN. "True, sir: As the ladies love to see themselves in a glass, so a man likes to see himself in his journal." BOSWELL. "A very pretty allusion." JOHNSON. "Yes, indeed." BOSWELL. "And as a lady adjusts her dress before a mirror, a man adjusts his character by looking at his journal." I next year found the very same thought in Atterbury's "Funeral Sermon on Lady Cutts;" where, having mentioned her Diary, he says, "In this glass she every day dressed her mind." This is a proof of coincidence, and not of plagiarism; for I had never read that sermon before.

Next morning, while we were at breakfast,

Johnson gave a very earnest recommendation of what he himself practised with the utmost conscientiousness: I mean a strict attention to truth, even in the most minute particulars: "Accustom your children (said he) constantly to this; if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you do not know where deviation from truth will end."

BOSWELL. "It may come to the door: and when once an account is at all varied in one circumstance, it may by degrees be varied so as to be totally different from what really happened." Our lively hostess, whose fancy was impatient of the rein, fidgeted at this, and ventured to say, "Nay, this is too much. If Mr. Johnson should forbid me to drink tea, I would comply, as I should feel the restraint only twice a day; but little variations in narrative must happen a thousand times a day if one is not perpetually watching." JOHNSON: "Well, madam, and you *ought* to be perpetually watching. It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying that there is so much falsehood in the world."

In his review of Dr. Warton's "Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope," Johnson has given the following salutary caution upon this subject: "Nothing but experience could evince the frequency of false information, or enable any man to conceive that so many groundless reports should be propagated, as every man of eminence may hear of himself. Some men relate what they think as what they know; some men of confused memories and habitual inaccuracy ascribe to one man what belongs to another; and some talk on, without thought or care. A few men are sufficient to broach falsehoods, which are

afterwards innocently diffused by successive relaters.<sup>9</sup>” Had he lived to read what Sir John Hawkins and Mrs. Piozzi have related concerning himself, how much would he have found his observation illustrated. He was indeed so much impressed with the prevalence of falsehood, voluntary or unintentional, that I never knew any person who, upon hearing an extraordinary circumstance told, discovered more of the *incredulis odi*. He would say with a significant look and decisive tone, “It is not so. Do not tell this again!” He inculcated upon all his friends the importance of perpetual vigilance against the slightest degrees of falsehood; the effect of which, as Sir Joshua Reynolds observed to me, has been, that all who were of his *school* are distinguished for a love of truth and accuracy, which they would not have possessed in the same degree if they had not been acquainted with Johnson.

Talking of ghosts, he said, “It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world, and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; but all belief is for it.”

He said, “John Wesley’s conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do.”

On Friday, April 3, I dined with him in Lon-

<sup>9</sup> Literary Magazine, 1756, p. 37.

<sup>\*</sup> The following plausible but overprudent counsel on this subject is given by an Italian writer, quoted by “*Rhedi de generatione insecutaram*,” with the epithet of “*divini poeta*.”

“*Sempre à querir ch’a faccia di menzogna  
Dee l’uom chiudere le labbra quando ei puote;  
Però che senza colpa fa vergogna.*”

don, in a company where were present several eminent men, whom I shall not name, but distinguish their parts in the conversation by different letters.

F. "I have been looking at this famous antique marble dog of Mr. Jennings, valued at a thousand guineas, said to be Alcibiades's dog." JOHNSON. "His tail then must be docked. That was the mark of Alcibiades's dog." E. "A thousand guineas! The representation of no animal whatever is worth so much. At this rate a dead dog would indeed be better than a living lion." JOHNSON. "Sir, it is not the worth of the thing but of the skill in forming it which is so highly estimated. Every thing that enlarges the sphere of human powers, that shows man he can do what he thought he could not do, is valuable. The first man who balanced a straw upon his nose; Johnson who rode upon three horses at a time; in short, all such men deserved the applause of mankind, not on account of the use of what they did, but of the dexterity which they exhibited." BOSWELL. "Yet a misapplication of time and assiduity is not to be encouraged." Addison, in one of his 'Spectators,' commends the judgment of a King who, as a suitable reward to a man that by long perseverance had attained to the art of throwing a barley-corn through the eye of a needle, gave him a bushel of barley." JOHNSON. "He must have been a King of Scotland, where barley is scarce." F. "One of the most remarkable antique figures of an animal is the boar at Florence." JOHNSON. "The first boar that is well made in marble should be preserved as a wonder. When men arrive at a facility of making boars well, then the workmanship is not of such value, but they should however be preserved as examples, and as a greater security for the restoration of the art, should it be lost."

E. "We hear prodigious complaints at present of emigration. I am convinced that emigration makes a country more populous." J. "That sounds very much like a paradox." E. "Exportation of men, like exportation of all other commodities, makes more be produced." JOHNSON. "But there would be more people were there not emigration, provided there were food for more." E. "No; leave a few breeders, and you'll have more people than if there were no emigration." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, it is plain there will be more people if there are more breeders: Thirty cows in good pasture will produce more calves than ten cows, provided they have good bulls." E. "There are bulls enough in Ireland." JOHNSON (smiling). "So, sir, I should think from your argument." BOSWELL. "You said, exportation of men, like exportation of other commodities, makes more be produced. But a bounty is given to encourage the exportation of corn, and no bounty is given for the exportation of men; though, indeed, those who go gain by it." R. "But the bounty on the exportation of corn is paid at home." E. "That's the same thing." JOHNSON. "No, sir." R. "A man who stays at home gains nothing by his neighbour's emigrating." BOSWELL. "I can understand that emigration may be the cause that more people may be produced in a country; but the country will not therefore be the more populous; for the people issue from it. It can only be said that there is a flow of people. It is an encouragement to have children, to know that they can get a living by emigration." R. "Yes, if there were an emigration of children under six years of age. But they don't emigrate till they could earn their livelihood in some way at home." C. "It is remarkable that the most unhealthy countries, where there are the most destructive diseases,

such as Egypt and Bengal, are the most populous." JOHNSON. "Countries which are the most populous have the most destructive diseases. *That is the true state of the proposition.*"

C. "Holland is very unhealthy, yet it is exceedingly populous." JOHNSON. "I know not that Holland is unhealthy. But its populousness is owing to an influx of people from all other countries. Disease cannot be the cause of populousness; for it not only carries off a great proportion of the people, but those who are left are weakened, and unfit for the purposes of increase."

R. "Mr. E. I don't mean to flatter; but when posterity reads one of your speeches in parliament, it will be difficult to believe that you took so much pains, knowing with certainty that it could produce no effect, that not one vote would be gained by it." E. "Waving your compliment to me, I shall say in general, that it is very well worth while for a man to take pains to speak well in parliament. A man who has vanity speaks to display his talents; and if a man speaks well, he gradually establishes a certain reputation and consequence in the general opinion which sooner or later will have its political reward. Besides, though not one vote is gained, a good speech has its effect. Though an act which has been ably opposed passes into a law, yet in its progress it is modeled, it is softened in such a manner that we see plainly the Minister has been told that the members attached to him are so sensible of its injustice or absurdity, from what they have heard, that it must be altered." JOHNSON. "And, sir, there is a gratification of pride. Though we cannot outvote them, we will outargue them. They shall not do wrong without its being shown both to themselves and to the world." E. "The House of Commons is a mixed



body. (I except the Minority, which I hold to be pure [smiling], but I take the whole House). It is a mass by no means pure; but neither is it wholly corrupt, though there is a large proportion of corruption in it. There are many members who generally go with the minister, who will not go all lengths. There are many honest well meaning country gentlemen who are in parliament only to keep up the consequence of their families. Upon most of these a good speech will have influence." JOHNSON. "We are all more or less governed by interest. But interest will not make us do every thing. In a case which admits of doubt, we try to think on the side which is for our interest, and generally bring ourselves to act accordingly. But the subject must admit of diversity of colouring; it must receive a colour on that side. In the House of Commons there are members enough who will not vote what is grossly unjust or absurd. No, sir, there must always be right enough, or appearance of right, to keep wrong in countenance." BOSWELL. "There is surely always a majority in parliament who have places, or who want to have them, and who therefore will be generally ready to support government without requiring any pretext." E. "True, sir; that majority will always follow

*'Quo clamor vocat et turba faventium.'*"

BOSWELL. "Well now, let us take the common phrase, Place-hunters. I thought they had hunted without regard to any thing, just as their huntsman, the Minister, leads, looking only to the prey." J. "But taking your metaphor, you

\* Lord Bolingbroke, who, however detestable as a metaphysician, must be allowed to have had admirable talents as a political writer, thus describes the House of Commons, in his "Letter to Sir William Wyndham:"—"You know the nature of that assembly; they grow, like hounds, fond of the man who shows them game, and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged."

know that in hunting there are few so desperately keen as to follow without reserve. Some do not choose to leap ditches and hedges and risk their necks, or gallop over steeps, or even to dirty themselves in bogs and mire." BOSWELL. "I am glad there are some good, quiet, moderate, political hunters." E. "I believe in any body of men in England I should have been in the Minority; I have always been in the Minority." P. "The House of Commons resembles a private company. How seldom is any man convinced by another's argument: passion and pride rise against it." R. "What would be the consequence, if a Minister, sure of a majority in the House of Commons, should resolve that there should be no speaking at all upon his side?" E. "He must soon go out. That has been tried; but it was found it would not do."——

E. "The Irish language is not primitive; it is Teutonical, a mixture of the northern tongues; it has much English in it." JOHNSON. "It may have been radically Teutonical; but English and High Dutch have no similarity to the eye, though radically the same. Once when looking into Low Dutch, I found, in a whole page, only one word similar to English; *stroem*, like *stream*, and it signified *tide*." E. "I remember having seen a Dutch sonnet, in which I found this word *roes-nopies*. Nobody would at first think that this could be English: but, when we inquire, we find *roes*, rose, and *nopie*, knob; so we have *rosebuds*."

JOHNSON. "I have been reading Thicknesse's Travels, which I think are entertaining." BOSWELL. "What, sir, a good book?" JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, to read once; I do not say you are to make a study of it, and digest it; and I believe it to be a true book in his intention. All travellers generally mean to tell truth; though Thick-



posely in the servant's way, in order to try his honesty, Sir Godfrey sent the master to prison<sup>3</sup>."

JOHNSON. "To resist temptation once is not a sufficient proof of honesty. If a servant, indeed, were to resist the continued temptation of silver lying in a window, as some people let it lie, when he is sure his master does not know how much there is of it, he would give a strong proof of honesty. But this is a proof to which you have no right to put a man. You know, humanly speaking, there is a certain degree of temptation which will overcome any virtue. Now, in so far as you approach temptation to a man, you do him an injury; and, if he is overcome, you share his guilt." P. "And when once overcome, it is easier for him to be got the better of again. Bos-

WELL. "Yes, you are his seducer; you have debauched him. I have known a man resolved to put friendship to the test, by asking a friend to lend him money, merely with that view, when he did not want it." JOHNSON. "That is very wrong, sir. Your friend may be a narrow man, and yet have many good qualities: narrowness may be his only fault. Now you are trying his general character as a friend, by one particular singly, in which he happens to be defective, when, in truth, his character is composed of many particulars."

E. "I understand the hogshead of claret, which this society was favoured with by our friend the Dean, is nearly out; I think he should be written to, to send another of the same kind. Let the request be made with a happy ambiguity of ex-

<sup>3</sup> Pope thus introduces this story:

"Faith, in such case if you should prosecute,  
I think Sir Godfrey should decide the suit,  
Who sent the thief who stole the cash away,  
And punish'd him that put it in his way."

*Imitations of Horace, Book ii. Epist. 2.*

pression, so that we may have the chance of his sending it also as a present." JOHNSON. "I am willing to offer my services as secretary on this occasion." P. "As many as are for Dr. Johnson being secretary hold up your hands.—Carried unanimously." BOSWELL. "He will be our Dictator." JOHNSON. "No, the company is to dictate to me. I am only to write for wine; and I am quite disinterested, as I drink none; I shall not be suspected of having forged the application. I am no more than an humble *scribe*." E. "Then you shall *prescribe*." BOSWELL. "Very well. The first play of words to-day." J. "No, no; the *bulls* in Ireland." JOHNSON. "Were I your Dictator, you should have no wine. It would be my business *cavere ne quid detrimenti Respublica caperet*, and wine is dangerous. Rome was ruined by luxury (smiling)." E. "If you allow no wine as Dictator, you shall not have me for your master of horse."

On Saturday, April 4, I drank tea with Johnson at Dr. Taylor's, where he had dined. He entertained us with an account of a tragedy written by a Dr. Kennedy (not the Lisbon physician). "The catastrophe of it (said he) was, that a King, who was jealous of his Queen with his prime minister, castrated himself". This tragedy was actually shown about in manuscript to several people, and, amongst others, to Mr. Fitzherbert, who repeated to me two lines of the Prologue:

'Our hero's fate we have but gently touch'd;  
The fair might blame us, if it were less couch'd.'

\* The reverse of the story of *Combabus*, on which Mr. David Hume told Lord Macartney, that a friend of his had written a tragedy. It is, however, possible that I may have been inaccurate in my perception of what Dr. Johnson related, and that he may have been talking of the same ludicrous tragical subject that Mr. Hume had mentioned.

[The story of *Combabus*, which was originally told by Lucian, may be found in Bayle's Dictionary. M.]

It is hardly to be believed what absurd and indecent images men will introduce into their writings, without being sensible of the absurdity and indecency. I remember Lord Orrery told me, that there was a pamphlet written against Sir Robert Walpole, the whole of which was an allegory on the PHALLICK ONSCENITY. The Duchess of Buckingham asked Lord Orrery *who* this person was? He answered he did not know. She said, she would send to Mr. Pulteney, who, she supposed, could inform her. So then, to prevent her from making herself ridiculous, Lord Orrery sent her grace a note, in which he gave her to understand what was meant."

He was very silent this evening; and read in a variety of books: suddenly throwing down one, and taking up another.

He talked of going to Streatham that night. TAYLOR. "You'll be robbed, if you do: or you must shoot a highwayman. Now I would rather be robbed than do that; I would not shoot a highwayman." JOHNSON. "But I would rather shoot him in the instant when he is attempting to rob me, than afterwards swear against him at the Old Bailey, to take away his life, after he has robbed me. I am surer I am right in the one case than in the other. I may be mistaken, as to the man when I swear; I cannot be mistaken if I shoot him in the act. Besides, we feel less reluctance to take away a man's life, when we are heated by the injury, than do it at a distance of time by an oath, after we have cooled." BOSWELL. "So, sir, you would rather act from the motive of private passion than that of publick advantage." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, when I shoot the highwayman, I act from both." BOSWELL. "Very well, very well.—There is no catching him." JOHNSON. "At the same time one does not know

what to say. For perhaps one may, a year after, hang himself from uneasiness for having shot a highwayman<sup>5</sup>. Few minds are fit to be trusted with so great a thing." BOSWELL. "Then, sir, you would not shoot him?" JOHNSON. "But I might be vexed afterwards for that too."

Thrale's carriage not having come for him, as he expected, I accompanied him some part of the way home to his own house. I told him, that I had talked of him to Mr. Dunning a few days before, and had said, that in his company we did not so much interchange conversation as listen to him; and that Dunning observed, upon this, "One is always willing to listen to Dr. Johnson:" to which I answered, "That is a great deal from you, sir."—"Yes, sir (said Johnson), a great deal indeed. Here is a man willing to listen, to whom the world is listening all the rest of the year." BOSWELL. "I think, sir, it is right to tell one man of such a handsome thing, which has been said of him by another. It tends to increase benevolence." JOHNSON. "Undoubtedly it is right, sir."

On Tuesday, April 7, I breakfasted with him at his house. He said, "nobody was content." I mentioned to him a respectable person in Scotland whom he knew; and I asserted, that I really believed he was always content. JOHNSON. "No, sir, he is not content with the present; he has

<sup>5</sup> The late Duke of Montrose was generally said to have been uneasy on that account; but I can contradict the report from his Grace's own authority. As he used to admit me to very easy conversation with him, I took the liberty to introduce the subject. His Grace told me, that when riding one night near London, he was attacked by two highwaymen on horseback, and that he instantly shot one of them, upon which the other galloped off; that his servant, who was very well mounted, proposed to pursue him and take him, but that his Grace said, "No, we have had blood enough: I hope the man may live to repent." His Grace, upon my presuming to put the question, assured me, that his mind was not at all clouded by what he had thus done in self-defence.

always some new scheme, some new plantation, something which is future. You know he was not content as a widower; for he married again."

BOSWELL. "But he is not restless." JOHNSON.

"Sir, he is only locally at rest. A chymist is locally at rest; but his mind is hard at work.

This gentleman has done with external exertions. It is too late for him to engage in distant projects." BOSWELL. "He seems to amuse himself quite well; to have his attention fixed, and his tranquillity preserved by very small matters. I

have tried this; but it would not do with me." JOHNSON (laughing). "No, sir; it must be born

with a man to be contented to take up with little things. Women have a great advantage that they may take up with little things, without disgracing themselves: a man cannot, except with fiddling. Had I learned to fiddle, I should have done nothing else." BOSWELL. "Pray, sir, did you ever play

on any musical instrument?" JOHNSON. "No, sir. I once bought me a flagelet; but I never made out a tune." BOSWELL. "A flagelet, sir!—so small

an instrument<sup>6</sup>? I should have liked to hear you play on the violoncello. *That* should have been *your* instrument." JOHNSON. "Sir, I might as well have played on the violoncello as another; but I should have done nothing else. No, sir;

a man would never undertake great things, could he be amused with small. I once tried knotting. Dempster's sister undertook to teach me; but I could not learn it." BOSWELL. "So, sir; it will

be related in pompous narrative, 'Once for his amusement he tried knotting; nor did this Hercules disdain the distaff.'" JOHNSON. "Knitting of stockings is a good amusement. As a free-

<sup>6</sup> When I told this to Miss Seward, she smiled, and repeated, with admirable readiness, from "Acis and Galatea,"

"Bring me a hundred reeds of ample growth,  
To make a pipe for my CAPACIOUS MOUTH."



man of Aberdeen I should be a knitter of stockings." He asked me to go down with him and dine at Mr. Thrale's at Streatham, to which I agreed. I had lent him "An Account of Scotland, in 1702," written by a man of various inquiry, an English chaplain to a regiment stationed there. JOHNSON. "It is sad stuff, sir, miserably written, as books in general then were. There is now an elegance of style universally diffused. No man now writes so ill as Martin's Account of the Hebrides is written. A man could not write so ill if he should try. Set a merchant's clerk now to write, and he'll do better."

He talked to me with serious concern of a certain female friend's "laxity of narration, and inattention to truth."—"I am as much vexed (said he) at the ease with which she hears it mentioned to her, as at the thing itself. I told her, 'Madam, you are contented to hear every day said to you, what the highest of mankind have died for, rather than bear.'—You know, sir, the highest of mankind have died rather than bear to be told they had uttered a falsehood. Do talk to her of it: I am weary."

BOSWELL. "Was not Dr. John Campbell a very inaccurate man in his narrative, sir? He once told me, that he drank thirteen bottles of port at a sitting?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, I do

<sup>7</sup> Lord Macartney observes upon this passage, "I have heard him tell many things, which, though embellished by their mode of narrative, had their foundation in truth; but I never remember any thing approaching to this. If he had written it, I should have supposed some wag had put the figure of one before the three."—I am, however, absolutely certain that Dr. Campbell told me it, and I gave particular attention to it, being myself a lover of wine, and therefore curious to hear whatever is remarkable concerning drinking. There can be no doubt that some men can drink, without suffering any injury, such a quantity as to others appears incredible. It is but fair to add, that Dr. Campbell told me, he took a very long time to this great potation; and I have heard Dr. Johnson say, "Sir, if a man drinks very slowly, and lets one glass evaporate before he takes another, I know not how long he may drink." Dr. Campbell mentioned a Colonel of Militia who sat with him all the time, and drank equally.

not know that Campbell ever lied with pen and ink; but you could not entirely depend on any thing he told you in conversation, if there was fact mixed with it. However, I loved Campbell: he was a solid orthodox man: he had a reverence for religion. Though defective in practice, he was religious in principle; and he did nothing grossly wrong that I have heard<sup>s</sup>."

I told him that I had been present the day before when Mrs. Montagu, the literary lady, sat to Miss Reynolds for her picture; and that she said, "she had bound up Mr. Gibbon's History without the last two offensive chapters; for that she thought the book so far good, as it gave, in an elegant manner, the substance of the bad writers *medii ævi*, which the late Lord Lyttelton advised her to read." JOHNSON. "Sir, she has not read them: she shows none of this impetuosity to me: she does not know Greek, and, I fancy, knows little Latin. She is willing you should think she knows them; but she does not say she does." BOSWELL. "Mr. Harris, who was present, agreed with her." JOHNSON. "Harris was laughing at her, sir. Harris is a sound sullen scholar: he does not like interlopers, Harris, however, is a prig, and a bad prig<sup>s</sup>. I looked into his book, and thought he did not understand his own system." BOSWELL. "He says plain things in a formal and abstract way, to be sure;

<sup>s</sup> [Dr. John Campbell died about two years before this conversation took place; Dec. 10, 1776. M.]

<sup>s</sup> What my friend meant by these words concerning the amiable philosopher of Salisbury, I am at a loss to understand. A friend suggests, that Johnson thought his *manner* as a writer affected, while at the same time the matter did not compensate for that fault. In short, that he meant to make a remark quite different from that which a celebrated gentleman made on a very eminent physician: "He is a coxcomb, but a satisfactory coxcomb."

[The celebrated gentleman here alluded to was the late Right Honourable William Gerard Hamilton. M.]

but his method is good : for, to have clear notions upon any subject, we must have recourse to analytick arrangement." JOHNSON. "Sir, it is what every body does, whether they will or no. But sometimes things may be made darker by definition. I see a *cow*. I define her, *Animal quadrupes ruminans cornutum*. But a goat ruminates, and a cow may have no horns. *Cow* is plainer." BOSWELL. "I think Dr. Franklin's definition of *Man* a good one—'A tool-making animal.'" JOHNSON. "But many a man never made a tool; and suppose a man without arms, he could not make a tool."

Talking of drinking wine, he said, "I did not leave off wine because I could not bear it; I have drunk three bottles of port without being the worse for it. University College has witnessed this." BOSWELL. "Why, then, sir, did you leave it off?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, because it is so much better for a man to be sure that he is never to be intoxicated, never to lose the power over himself. I shall not begin to drink wine again till I grow old and want it." BOSWELL. "I think, sir, you once said to me, that not to drink wine was a great deduction from life." JOHNSON. "It is a diminution of pleasure, to be sure; but I do not say a diminution of happiness. There is more happiness in being rational." BOSWELL. "But if we could have pleasure always, should not we be happy? The greatest part of men would compound for pleasure." JOHNSON. "Supposing we could have pleasure always, an intellectual man would not compound for it. The greatest part of men would compound because the greatest part of men are gross." BOSWELL. "I allow there may be greater pleasure than from wine. I have had more pleasure from your conversation. I have indeed; I assure you I have."

JOHNSON. "When we talk of pleasure, we mean sensual pleasure. When a man says, he had pleasure with a woman, he does not mean conversation, but something of a very different nature. Philosophers tell you that pleasure is *contrary* to happiness. Gross men prefer animal pleasure. So there are men who have preferred living among savages. Now what a wretch must he be who is content with such conversation as can be had among savages! You may remember, an officer at Fort Augustus, who had served in America, told us of a woman whom they were obliged to *bind*, in order to get her back from savage life." BOSWELL. "She must have been an animal, a beast." JOHNSON. "Sir, she was a speaking cat."

I mentioned to him that I had become very weary in a company where I heard not a single intellectual sentence, except that "a man who had been settled ten years in Minorca was become a much inferior man to what he was in London; because a man's mind grows narrow in a narrow place." JOHNSON. "A man's mind grows narrow in a narrow place, whose mind is enlarged only because he has lived in a large place: but what is got by books and thinking is preserved in a narrow place as well as in a large place. A man cannot know modes of life as well in Minorca as in London; but he may study mathematicks as well in Minorca." BOSWELL. "I don't know, sir: if you had remained ten years in the Isle of Col, you would not have been the man that you now are." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, if I had been there from fifteen to twenty-five; but not if from twenty-five to thirty-five." BOSWELL. "I own, sir, the spirits which I have in London make me do every thing with more readiness and vigour. I can talk twice as much in London as any where else."

Of Goldsmith, he said, "He was not an agree-

able companion, for he talked always for fame. A man who does so never can be pleasing. The man who talks to unburthen his mind is the man to delight you. An eminent friend of ours is not so agreeable as the variety of his knowledge would otherwise make him, because he talks partly from ostentation."

Soon after our arrival at Thrale's, I heard one of the maids calling eagerly on another, to go to Dr. Johnson. I wondered what this could mean. I afterwards learned, that it was to give her a Bible, which he had brought from London as a present to her.

He was for a considerable time occupied in reading, "*Mémoires de Fontenelle*," leaning and swinging upon the low gate into the court, without his hat.

I looked into Lord Kaimes's "Sketches of the History of Man;" and mentioned to Dr. Johnson his censure of Charles the Fifth, for celebrating his funeral obsequies in his lifetime, which, I told him, I had been used to think a solemn and affecting act. JOHNSON: "Why, sir, a man may dispose his mind to think so of that act of Charles; but it is so liable to ridicule, that if one man out of ten thousand laughs at it, he'll make the other nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine laugh too." I could not agree with him in this.

Sir John Pringle had expressed a wish that I would ask Dr. Johnson's opinion what were the best English sermons for style. I took an opportunity to-day of mentioning several to him. *Atterbury*? JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, one of the best." BOSWELL. "*Tillotson*?" JOHNSON. "Why, not now. I should not advise a preacher at this day to imitate Tillotson's style; though I don't know; I should be cautious of objecting to what has been applauded by so many suffrages.—*South* is one of the best, if you except his peculiarities,

and his violence, and sometimes coarseness of language.—*Seed* has a very fine style; but he is not very theological.—*Jortin's* sermons are very elegant.—*Sherlock's* style too is very elegant, though he has not made it his principal study.—And you may add *Smallridge*. All the latter preachers have a good style. Indeed, nobody now talks much of style: every body composes pretty well. There are no such inharmonious periods as there were a hundred years ago. I should recommend Dr. *Clarke's* sermons, were he orthodox. However, it is very well known *where* he is not orthodox, which was upon the doctrine of the Trinity, as to which he is a condemned heretick; so one is aware of it." BOSWELL. "I like Ogden's Sermons on Prayer very much, both for neatness of style and subtilty of reasoning." JOHNSON. "I should like to read all that Ogden has written." BOSWELL. "What I wish to know is, what sermons afford the best specimen of English pulpit eloquence." JOHNSON. "We have no sermons addressed to the passions that are good for any thing; if you mean that kind of eloquence." A CLERGYMAN (whose name I do not recollect). "Were not Dodd's sermons addressed to the passions?" JOHNSON. "They were nothing, sir, be they addressed to what they may."

At dinner, Mrs. Thrale expressed a wish to go and see Scotland. JOHNSON. "Seeing Scotland, madam, is only seeing a worse England. It is seeing the flower gradually fade away to the naked stalk. Seeing the Hebrides, indeed, is seeing quite a different scene.

Our poor friend, Mr. Thomas Davies, was soon to have a benefit at Drury Lane Theatre, as some relief to his unfortunate circumstances. We were all warmly interested for his success; and

had contributed to it. However, we thought there was no harm in having our joke, when he could not be hurt by it. I proposed that he should be brought on to speak a Prologue upon the occasion; and I began to mutter fragments of what it might be: as, that when now grown *old*, he was obliged to cry, "Poor Tom's *a-cold*;"—that, he owned he had been driven from the stage by a Churchill, but that this was no disgrace, for a Churchill had beat the French;—that he had been satirized as "mouthing a sentence as curs mouth a bone," but he was now glad of a bone to pick.—"Nay (said Johnson), I would have him to say,

'Mad Tom is come to see the world again.'

He and I returned to town in the evening. Upon the road I endeavoured to maintain, in argument, that a landed gentleman is not under any obligation to reside upon his estate; and that by living in London he does no injury to his country. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, he does no injury to his country in general, because the money which he draws from it gets back again in circulation; but to his particular district, his particular parish, he does an injury. All that he has to give away is not given to those who have the first claim to it. And though I have said that the money circulates back, it is a long time before that happens. Then, sir, a man of family and estate ought to consider himself as having the charge of a district, over which he is to diffuse civility and happiness<sup>1</sup>."

Next day I found him at home in the morning. He praised "Delany's Observations on Swift;"

<sup>1</sup> [See, however, pp. 181, 182, where his decision on the subject is more favourable to the absentee. M.]

said that his book and Lord Orrery's might both be true, though one viewed Swift more and the other less favourably; and that, between both, we might have a complete notion of Swift.

Talking of a man's resolving to deny himself the use of wine, from moral and religious considerations, he said, "He must not doubt about it. When one doubts as to pleasure, we know what will be the conclusion. I now no more think of drinking wine than a horse does. The wine upon the table is no more for me than for the dog that is under the table."

On Thursday, April 9, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, with the Bishop of St. Asaph, (Dr. Shipley), Mr. Allan Ramsay, Mr. Gibbon, Mr. Cambridge, and Mr. Langton. Mr. Ramsay had lately returned from Italy, and entertained us with his observations upon Horace's villa, which he had examined with great care. I relished this much, as it brought fresh into my mind what I had viewed with great pleasure thirteen years before. The Bishop, Dr. Johnson, and Mr. Cambridge, joined with Mr. Ramsay in recollecting the various lines in Horace relating to the subject.

Horace's journey to Brundisium being mentioned, Johnson observed, that the brook which he describes is to be seen now, exactly as at that time; and that he had often wondered how it happened, that small brooks, such as this, kept the same situation for ages, notwithstanding earthquakes, by which even mountains have been changed, and agriculture, which produces such a variation upon the face of the earth. CAMBRIDGE. "A Spanish writer has this thought in a poetical conceit. After observing that most of the solid structures of Rome are totally perished, while the Tiber remains the same, he adds,



*'Lo que era Firme huió solamente;  
Lo Fugitivo permanece y dura.' "*

JOHNSON. "Sir, that is taken from *Janus Vitalis*:

*immota labescunt;  
Et quæ perpetub sunt agitata manent.' "*

The Bishop said, it appeared from Horace's writings that he was a cheerful contented man.

JOHNSON. "We have no reason to believe that, my Lord. Are we to think Pope was happy, because he says so in his writings? We see in his writings what he wished the state of his mind to appear. Dr. Young, who pined for preferment, talks with contempt of it in his writings, and affects to despise every thing that he did not despise." BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH. "He was like other chaplains, looking for vacancies: but that is not peculiar to the clergy. I remember when I was with the army, after the battle of Lafeldt, the officers seriously grumbled that no general was killed." CAMBRIDGE. "We may believe Horace more, when he says,

*'Romæ Tibur amem, ventosus Tibure Romam;'*

than when he boasts of his consistency:

*'Me constare mihi scis, et decedere tristem,  
Quandoque trahunt invisa negotia Romam.' "*

BOSWELL. "How hard is it that man can never be at rest." RAMSAY. "It is not in his nature to be at rest. When he is at rest, he is in the worst state that he can be in; for he has nothing to agitate him. He is then like the man in the Irish song,

*'There lived a young man in Ballinacrazy,  
Who wanted a wife for to make him unaisy.' "*

Goldsmith being mentioned, Johnson observed, that it was long before his merit came to be acknowledged: that he once complained to him, in

ludicrous terms of distress, "Whenever I write any thing, the publick *make a point* to know nothing about it:" but that his "*Traveller*:" brought him into high reputation. LANGTON: "There is not one bad line in that poem; not one of Dryden's careless verses." SIR JOSHUA: "I was glad to hear Charles Fox say, it was one of the finest poems in the English language." LANGTON: "Why were you glad? You surely had no doubt of this before." JOHNSON. "No; the merit of '*The Traveller*' is so well established that Mr. Fox's praise cannot augment it, nor his censure diminish it." SIR JOSHUA. "But his friends may suspect they had too great a partiality for him." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, the partiality of his friends was always against him. It was with difficulty we could give him a hearing. Goldsmith had no settled notions upon any subject; so he talked always at random. It seemed to be his intention to blurt out whatever was in his mind, and see what would become of it. He was angry too; when caught in an absurdity; but it did not prevent him from falling into another the next minute. I remember Chamier<sup>2</sup>, after talking with him some time, said; 'Well, I do believe he wrote this poem himself: and let me tell you, that is believing a great deal.'—Chamier once asked him what he meant by *slow*, the last word in the first line of '*The Traveller*,'

'Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,'—

Did he mean tardiness of locomotion? Goldsmith, who would say something without consideration, answered; 'Yes.' I was sitting by, and said, 'No, sir; you do not mean tardiness of locomotion; you mean that sluggishness of mind

<sup>2</sup> [First published in 1765. M.]

<sup>3</sup> [Anthony Chamier, Esq. a member of the Literary Club, and Under Secretary of State. He died Oct. 12, 1780. M.]



"Literature was in France long before we had it. Paris was the second city for the revival of letters: Italy had it first, to be sure. What have we done for literature, equal to what was done by the Stephani and others in France? Our literature came to us through France. Caxton printed only two books, Chaucer and Gower, that were not translations from the French; and Chaucer, we know, took much from the Italians. No, sir, if literature be in its spring in France, it is a second spring; it is after a winter. We are now before the French in literature; but we had it long after them. In England, any man who wears a sword and a powdered wig is ashamed to be illiterate. I believe it is not so in France. Yet there is, probably, a great deal of learning in France, because they have such a number of religious establishments; so many men who have nothing else to do but to study. I do not know this; but I take it upon the common principles of chance. Where there are many shooters some will hit."

We talked of old age. Johnson (now in his seventieth year) said, "It is a man's own fault, it is from want of use, if his mind grows torpid in old age." The Bishop asked, if an old man does not lose faster than he gets. JOHNSON. "I think not, my Lord, if he exerts himself." One of the company rashly observed, that he thought it was happy for an old man that insensibility comes upon him. JOHNSON (with a noble elevation and disdain). "No, sir, I should never be happy by being less rational." BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH. "Your wish then, sir, is, *γῆρασκειν διδασκομένους*." JOHNSON. "Yes, my Lord." His Lordship mentioned a charitable establishment in Wales, where people were maintained and supplied with every thing, upon the condition of their contributing

the weekly produce of their labour; and he said, they grew quite torpid for want of property. JOHNSON. "They have no object for hope.— Their condition cannot be better. It is rowing without a port."

One of the company asked him the meaning of the expression in Juvenal, *unius lacertæ*. JOHNSON: "I think it clear enough; as much ground as one may have a chance to find a lizard upon."

Commentators have differed as to the exact meaning of the expression by which the Poet intended to enforce the sentiment contained in the passage where these words occur. It is enough that they mean to denote even a very small possession, provided it be a man's own:

*"Est aliquid, quocunque loco quocunque recessu,  
Unius sese dominum fecisse lacertæ."*

This season there was a whimsical fashion in the newspapers of applying Shakspeare's words to describe living persons well known in the world, which was done under the title of "*Modern Characters from Shakspeare*;" many of which were admirably adapted. The fancy took so much that they were afterwards collected into a pamphlet. Somebody said to Johnson, across the table, that he had not been in those characters. "Yes (said he), I have. I should have been sorry to be left out." He then repeated what had been applied to him,

"You must borrow me Garagantua's mouth."

Miss Reynolds not perceiving at once the meaning of this, he was obliged to explain it to her, which had something of an awkward and ludicrous effect. "Why, madam, it has a reference to me, as using big words, which require the mouth of a giant to pronounce them. Garagantua—

tua is the name of a giant in Rabelais." Boswell. "But, sir, there is another amongst them for you:

'He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,  
Or Jove for his power to thunder.'

JOHNSON. "There is nothing marked in that.—No, sir, Garagantua is the best." Notwithstanding this ease and good humour, when I, a little while afterwards, repeated his sarcasm on Kenrick<sup>4</sup>, which was received with applause, he asked, "*Who* said that?" and on my suddenly answering *Garagantua*, he looked serious, which was a sufficient indication that he did not wish it to be kept up.

When we went to the drawingroom, there was a rich assemblage. Besides the company who had been at dinner, there were Mr. Garrick, Mr. Harris of Salisbury, Dr. Percy, Dr. Burney, the Honourable Mrs. Cholmondeley, Miss Hannah More, &c. &c.

After wandering about in a kind of pleasing distraction for some time, I got into a corner, with Johnson, Garrick, and Harris. GARRICK (to Harris). "Pray, sir, have you read Potter's *Æschylus*?" HARRIS. "Yes; and think it pretty." GARRICK (to Johnson). "And what think you, sir, of it?" JOHNSON. "I thought what I read of it *verbiage*: but upon Mr. Harris's recommendation I will read a play. (To Mr. Harris). Don't prescribe two." Mr. Harris suggested one; I do not remember which. JOHNSON. "We must try its effect as an English poem; that is the way to judge of the merit of a translation. Translations are, in general, for people who cannot read the original." I mentioned the vulgar saying; that Pope's Homer was not a good repre-

<sup>4</sup> See vol. ii. p. 11.

sentation of the original. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is the greatest work of the kind that has ever been produced." BOSWELL. "The truth is, it is impossible perfectly to translate poetry. In a different language it may be the same tune, but it has not the same tone. Homer plays it on a bassoon; Pope on a flageolet." HARRIS. "I think heroick poetry is best in blank verse; yet it appears that rhyme is essential to English poetry from our deficiency in metrical quantities. In my opinion, the chief excellence of our language is numerous prose." JOHNSON. "Sir William Temple was the first writer who gave cadence to English prose". Before his time they were careless of arrangement, and did not mind whether a sentence ended with an important word or an insignificant word, or with what part of speech it was concluded." Mr. Langton, who now had joined us, commended Clarendon. JOHNSON. "He is objected to for his parentheses, his in-

<sup>5</sup> [The authour, in vol. i. p. 174, says, that Johnson once told him, "that he had formed his style upon that of Sir William Temple, and upon Chambers's Proposal for his Dictionary. He certainly was mistaken; or, if he imagined at first that he was imitating Temple, he was very unsuccessful, for nothing can be more unlike than the simplicity of Temple and the richness of Johnson."

This observation, on the first view, seems perfectly just; but on a closer examination, it will, I think, appear to have been founded on a misapprehension. Mr. Boswell understood Johnson too literally. He did not, I conceive, mean, that he endeavoured to imitate Temple's style in all its parts; but that he formed his style on him and Chambers (perhaps the paper published in 1737, relative to his second edition, entitled *CONSIDERATIONS, &c.*) taking from each what was most worthy of imitation. The passage before us, I think, shows, that he learned from Temple to modulate his periods, and, *in that respect only*, made him his pattern. In this view of the subject there is no difficulty. He might learn from Chambers compactness, strength, and precision (in opposition to the laxity of style which had long prevailed); from Sir Thomas Browne (who was also certainly one of his archetypes), *pondera verborum*, vigour and energy of expression; and from Temple, harmonious arrangement, the due collocation of words, and the other arts and graces of composition here enumerated: and yet, after all, his style might bear no striking resemblance to that of any of these writers, though it had profited by each. M.]

volved clauses, and his want of harmony. But he is supported by his matter. It is, indeed; owing to a plethory of matter that his style is so faulty: every *substance* (smiling to Mr. Harris) has so many *accidents*.—To be distinct we must talk *analytically*. If we analyse language, we must speak of it grammatically; if we analyse argument, we must speak of it logically.” GARRICK. “Of all the translations that ever were attempted, I think Elphinston’s *Martial* the most extraordinary. He consulted me upon it, who am a little of an epigrammist myself, you know. I told him freely, ‘You don’t seem to have that turn.’ I asked him if he was serious; and finding he was, I advised him against publishing. Why, his translation is more difficult to understand than the original. I thought him a man of some talents; but he seems crazy in this.” JOHNSON. “Sir, you have done what I had not courage to do. But he did not ask my advice, and I did not force it upon him, to make him angry with me.” GARRICK. “But as a friend, sir—” JOHNSON. “Why, such a friend as I am with him—no.” GARRICK. “But if you see a friend going to tumble over a precipice?” JOHNSON. “That is an extravagant case, sir. You are sure a friend will thank you for hindering him from tumbling over a precipice: but, in the other case, I should hurt his vanity, and do him no good. He would not take my advice. His brother-in-law, Strahan, sent him a subscription of fifty pounds, and said he would send him fifty more if he would not publish.” GARRICK. “What! eh! is Strahan a good judge of an Epigram? Is not he rather an *obtuse* man, eh?” JOHNSON. “Why, sir, he may not be a judge of an Epigram: but you see he is a judge of what is *not* an Epigram.” BOSWELL. “It is easy for you, Mr. Garrick, to talk to an



author as you talked to Elphinston; you, who have been so long the manager of a theatre, rejecting the plays of poor authors. You are an old judge, who have often pronounced sentence of death. You are a practised surgeon who have often amputated limbs; and though this may have been for the good of your patients, they cannot like you. Those who have undergone a dreadful operation are not very fond of seeing the operator again." GARRICK. "Yes, I know enough of that. There was a reverend gentleman (Mr. Hawkins) who wrote a tragedy, the *SIEGE* of something<sup>6</sup>, which I refused." HARRIS. "So, the siege was raised." JOHNSON. "Ay, he came to me and complained; and told me, that Garrick said his play was wrong in the *concoction*. Now, what is the concoction of a play?" (Here Garrick started, and twisted himself, and seemed sorely vexed; for Johnson told me, he believed the story was true.) GARRICK, "I—I—I—said, *first concoction*." JOHNSON (smiling). "Well, he left out *first*. And Rich, he said, refused him *in false English*: he could show it under his hand." GARRICK. "He wrote to me in violent wrath, for having refused his play. 'Sir, this is growing a very serious and terrible affair. I am resolved to publish my play. I will appeal to the world; and how will your judgment appear!' I answered, 'Sir, notwithstanding all the seriousness, and all the terrors, I have no objection to your publishing your play; and as you live at a great distance (Devonshire, I believe), if you will send it to me, I will convey it to the press.' I never heard more of it, ha! ha! ha!"

<sup>6</sup> It was called "The Siege of Aleppo." Mr. Hawkins, the author of it, was formerly professor of Poetry at Oxford. It is printed in his "Miscellanies," 3 vols. octavo.

<sup>7</sup> [Garrick had high authority for this expression. Dryden uses it in one of his critical essays. M.]

On Friday, April 10, I found Johnson at home in the morning. We resumed the conversation of yesterday. He put me in mind of some of it which had escaped my memory, and enabled me to record it more perfectly than I otherwise could have done. He was much pleased with my paying so great attention to his recommendation in 1763, the period when our acquaintance began, that I should keep a journal; and I could perceive he was secretly pleased to find so much of the fruit of his mind preserved: and as he had been used to imagine and say, that he always laboured when he said a good thing,—it delighted him, on a review, to find that his conversation teemed with point and imagery.

I said to him, “You were yesterday, sir, in remarkably good humour; but there was nothing to offend you, nothing to produce irritation or violence. There was no bold offender. There was not one capital conviction. It was a maiden assize. You had on your white gloves.”

He found fault with our friend Langton for having been too silent. “Sir (said I); you will recollect that he very properly took up Sir Joshua for being glad that Charles Fox had praised Goldsmith’s ‘Traveller,’ and you joined him.”

JOHNSON. “Yes, sir, I knocked Fox on the head without ceremony. Reynolds is too much under Fox and Burke at present. He is under the *Fox star*, and the *Irish constellation*. He is always under some planet.”

BOSWELL. “There is no Fox star.”

JOHNSON. “But there is a dog star.”

BOSWELL. “They say, indeed, a fox and a dog are the same animal.”

I reminded him of a gentleman who, Mrs. Cholmondeley said, was first talkative from affectation, and then silent from the same cause; that he first thought, “I shall be celebrated as the live-

liest man in every company;" and then, all at once; "O! it is much more respectable to be grave and look wise." "He has reversed the Pythagorean discipline, by being first talkative and then silent. He reverses the course of Nature too; he was first the gay butterfly, and then the creeping worm." Johnson laughed loud and long at this expansion and illustration of what he himself had told me.

We dined together with Mr. Scott (now Sir William Scott, his Majesty's Advocate General<sup>3</sup>), at his chambers in the Temple, nobody else there. The company being small, Johnson was not in such spirits as he had been the preceding day, and for a considerable time little was said. At last he burst forth: "Subordination is sadly broken down in this age. No man now has the same authority which his father had,—except a gaoler. No master has it over his servants: it is diminished in our colleges; nay, in our grammar schools." BOSWELL: "What is the cause of this, sir?" JOHNSON. "Why, the coming in of the Scotch" (laughing sarcastically). BOSWELL. "That is to say, things have been turned topsy-turvy.—But your serious cause." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, there are many causes, the chief of which is, I think, the great increase of money. No man now depends upon the Lord of a Manour, when he can send to another country and fetch provisions. The shoeblack at the entry of my court does not depend on me. I can deprive him but of a penny a day, which he hopes somebody else will bring him; and that penny I must carry to another shoeblack, so the trade suffers nothing. I have explained, in my 'Journey to the Hebrides,' how gold and silver destroy feudal subor-

<sup>3</sup> [Now (1804) Judge of the Court of Admiralty, and Minister of the Faculties. M.]

dination. But, besides, there is a general relaxation of reverence. No son now depends upon his father as in former times. Paternity used to be considered as of itself a great thing, which had a right to many claims. That is, in general, reduced to very small bounds. My hope is, that as anarchy produces tyranny, this extreme relaxation will produce *freni strictio*."

Talking of fame, for which there is so great a desire, I observed how little there is of it in reality, compared with the other objects of human attention. "Let every man recollect, and he will be sensible how small a part of his time is employed in talking or thinking of Shakspeare, Voltaire, or any of the most celebrated men that have ever lived; or are now supposed to occupy the attention and admiration of the world. Let this be extracted and compressed; into what a narrow space will it go!" I then silyly introduced Mr. Garrick's fame, and his assuming the airs of a great man. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is wonderful how *little* Garrick assumes. No; sir, Garrick *fortunam reverenter habet*. Consider, sir; celebrated men, such as you have mentioned, have had their applause at a distance; but Garrick had it dashed in his face, sounded in his ears; and went home every night with the plaudits of a thousand in his *cranium*. Then, sir, Garrick did not *find* but *made* his way to the tables, the levees, and almost the bedchambers of the great. Then, sir, Garrick had under him a numerous body of people; who, from fear of his power, and hopes of his favour; and admiration of his talents, were constantly submissive to him. And here is a man who has advanced the dignity of his profession. Garrick has made a player a higher character." SCOTT. "And he is a very sprightly writer too." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir; and all this supported by

great wealth of his own acquisition. If all this had happened to me, I should have had a couple of fellows with long poles walking before me to knock down every body that stood in the way. Consider, if all this had happened to Cibber or Quin, they'd have jumped over the moon.—Yet Garrick speaks to *us*" (smiling). BOSWELL. "And Garrick is a very good man, a charitable man." JOHNSON. "Sir, a liberal man. He has given away more money than any man in England. There may be a little vanity mixed; but he has shown that money is not his first object." BOSWELL. "Yet Foote used to say of him, that he walked out with an intention to do a generous action; but turning the corner of a street, he met with the ghost of a halfpenny, which frightened him." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, that is very true, too; for I never knew a man of whom it could be said with less certainty to-day what he will do to-morrow than Garrick; it depends so much on his humour at the time." SCOTT. "I am glad to hear of his liberality. He has been represented as very saving." JOHNSON. "With his domestick saving we have nothing to do. I remember drinking tea with him long ago, when Peg Woffington made it, and he grumbled at her for making it too strong". He had then begun to feel money in his purse, and did not know when he should have enough of it."

On the subject of wealth, the proper use of it, and the effects of that art which is called economy, he observed, "It is wonderful to think how men of very large estates not only spend their yearly incomes, but are often actually in want of money. It is clear they have not value for what

<sup>9</sup> When Johnson told this little anecdote to Sir Joshua Reynolds, he mentioned a circumstance which he omitted to-day:—"Why (said Garrick), it is as red as blood."

they spend. Lord Shelbourne told me, that a man of high rank, who looks into his own affairs, may have all that he ought to have, all that can be of any use, or appear with any advantage, for five thousand pounds a year. Therefore a great proportion must go in waste; and, indeed, this is the case with most people, whatever their fortune is." BOSWELL. "I have no doubt, sir, of this. But how is it? What is waste?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, breaking bottles, and a thousand other things. Waste cannot be accurately told, though we are sensible how destructive it is. Economy on the one hand, by which a certain income is made to maintain a man genteelly, and waste on the other, by which, on the same income, another man lives shabbily, cannot be defined. It is a very nice thing; as one man wears his coat out much sooner than another, we cannot tell how."

We talked of war. JOHNSON. "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea." BOSWELL. "Lord Mansfield does not." JOHNSON. "Sir, if Lord Mansfield were in a company of General Officers and Admirals who have been in service, he would shrink; he'd wish to creep under the table." BOSWELL. "No; he'd think he could *try* them all." JOHNSON. "Yes, if he could catch them: but they'd try him much sooner. No, sir; were Socrates and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, 'Follow me, and hear a lecture in philosophy;' and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, to say, 'Follow me, and dethrone the Czar;' a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates. Sir, the impression is universal: yet it is strange. As to the sailor, when you look down from the quarter deck to the space below, you see the utmost extremity of human misery: such crowding, such



Alcibiades by a Greek poet, to which Johnson assented<sup>1</sup>.

He told us that he had given Mrs. Montagu a catalogue of all Daniel Defoe's works of imagination; most, if not all of which, as well as of his other works, he now enumerated, allowing a considerable share of merit to a man, who, bred a tradesman, had written so variously and so well. Indeed, his "Robinson Crusoe" is enough of itself to establish his reputation.

He expressed great indignation at the imposture of the Cock Lane Ghost, and related, with much satisfaction, how he had assisted in detecting the cheat, and had published an account of it in the newspapers. Upon this subject I incautiously offended him, by pressing him with too many questions, and he showed his displeasure. I apologized, saying that "I asked questions in order to be instructed and entertained; I repaired eagerly to the fountain; but that the moment he gave me a hint, the moment he put a lock upon the well, I desisted."—"But, sir (said he), that is forcing one to do a disagreeable thing;" and he continued to rate me. "Nay, sir (said I), when you have put a lock upon the

<sup>1</sup> [Wishing to discover the ancient observation here referred to, I applied to Sir William Scott on the subject, but he had no recollection of it.—My old and very learned friend, Dr. Michael Kearney, formerly senior fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and now Archdeacon of Raphoe in Ireland, has, however, most happily elucidated this passage. He remarks to me that "Mr. Boswell's memory must here have deceived him; and that Mr. Scott's observation must have been, that 'Mr. Fox, in the instance mentioned, might be considered as the reverse of Phœax, of whom, as Plutarch relates in the Life of Alcibiades, Eupolis the tragedian said, *It is true he can talk, and yet he is no speaker.*'"]

.. If this discovery had been made, by a scholiast on an ancient author, with what ardour and exuberant praise, would Bentley or Taylor have spoken of it!—Sir William Scott, to whom I communicated Dr. Kearney's remark, is perfectly satisfied that it is correct. For the other observations signed K. we are indebted to the same gentleman. Every classical reader will lament that they are not more numerous. M.]



well, so that I can no longer drink, do not make the fountain of your wit play upon me and wet me."

He sometimes could not bear being teased with questions. I was once present when a gentleman asked so many, as, "What did you do, sir?" "What did you say, sir?" that he at last grew enraged, and said, "I will not be put to the question. Don't you consider, sir, that these are not the manners of a gentleman? I will not be baited with *what* and *why*: what is this? what is that? why is a cow's tail long? why is a fox's tail bushy?" The gentleman, who was a good deal out of countenance, said, "Why, sir, you are so good that I venture to trouble you." JOHNSON. "Sir, my being so good is no reason why you should be so ill."

Talking of the *Justitia* hulk at Woolwich, in which criminals were punished, by being confined to labour, he said, "I do not see that they are punished by this: they must have worked equally, had they never been guilty of stealing. They now only work; so, after all, they have gained; what they stole is clear gain to them; the confinement is nothing. Every man who works is confined: the smith to his shop, the tailor to his garret." BOSWELL. "And Lord Mansfield to his Court." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir. You know the notion of confinement may be extended, as in the song, 'Every island is a prison.' There is, in Dodsley's collection, a copy of verses to the authour of that song."

Smith's Latin verses on Pococke, the great traveller<sup>2</sup>, were mentioned. He repeated some of them, and said they were Smith's best verses.

<sup>2</sup> [Smith's Verses on Edward Pococke, the great Oriental Linguist: he travelled, it is true: but Dr. Richard Pococke, late Bishop of Ossory, who published *Travels through the East*, is usually called the great traveller. K.]

He talked with an uncommon animation of travelling into distant countries; that the mind was enlarged by it, and that an acquisition of dignity of character was derived from it. He expressed a particular enthusiasm with respect to visiting the wall of China. I caught it for the moment, and said I really believed I should go and see the wall of China, had I not children, of whom it was my duty to take care. "Sir (said he), by doing so, you would do what would be of importance in raising your children to eminence. There would be a lustre reflected upon them from your spirit and curiosity. They would be at all times regarded as the children of a man who had gone to view the wall of China. I am serious, sir."

When we had left Mr. Scott's, he said, "Will you go home with me?" "Sir (said I), it is late; but I'll go with you for three minutes." JOHNSON. "Or *four*." We went to Mrs. Williams's room, where we found Mr. Allen the printer, who was the landlord of his house in Bolt Court, a worthy obliging man; and his very old acquaintance; and what was exceedingly amusing; though he was of a very diminutive size; he used; even in Johnson's presence, to imitate the stately periods and slow and solemn utterance of the great man.—I this evening boasted, that although I did not write what is called stenography; or shorthand, in appropriated characters devised for the purpose, I had a method of my own of writing half words, and leaving out some altogether, so as yet to keep the substance and language of any discourse which I had heard so much in view that I could give it very completely soon after I had taken it down. He defied me, as he had once defied an actual shorthand writer; and he made the experiment by reading slowly

and distinctly a part of Robertson's "History of America," while I endeavoured to write it in my way of taking notes. It was found that I had it very imperfectly; the conclusion from which was, that its excellence was principally owing to a studied arrangement of words, which could not be varied or abridged without an essential injury.

On Sunday, April 12, I found him at home before dinner. Dr. Dodd's poem, entitled: "Thoughts in Prison," was lying upon his table. This appearing to me an extraordinary effort by a man who was in Newgate for a capital crime, I was desirous to hear Johnson's opinion of it: to my surprise, he told me he had not read a line of it. I took up the book, and read a passage to him. JOHNSON. "Pretty well, if you are previously disposed to like them." I read another passage, with which he was better pleased. He then took the book into his own hands, and having looked at the prayer at the end of it, he said, "What *evidence* is there that this was composed the night before he suffered? *I* do not believe it." He then read aloud where he prays for the King, &c. and observed, "Sir, do you think that a man, the night before he is to be hanged, cares for the succession of a royal family?—Though, he *may* have composed this prayer, then. A man who has been canting all his life may cant to the last. And yet a man who has been refused a pardon after so much petitioning would hardly be praying thus fervently for the King."

He and I and Mrs. Williams went to dine with the Reverend Dr. Percy. Talking of Goldsmith; Johnson said, he was very envious. I defended him, by observing that he owned it frankly upon all occasions. JOHNSON. "Sir, you are enforcing the charge. He had so much envy that he

could not conceal it. He was so full of it that he overflowed. He talked of it to be sure often enough. Now, sir, what a man avows he is not ashamed to think; though many a man thinks what he is ashamed to avow. We are all envious naturally; but by checking envy, we get the better of it. So we are all thieves naturally; a child always tries to get at what it wants the nearest way; by good instruction and good habits this is cured, till a man has not even an inclination to seize what is another's; has no struggle with himself about it."

And here I shall record a scene of too much heat between Dr. Johnson and Dr. Percy, which I should have suppressed, were it not that it gave occasion to display the truly tender and benevolent heart of Johnson, who, as soon as he found a friend was at all hurt by any thing which he had "said in his wrath," was not only prompt and desirous to be reconciled, but exerted himself to make ample reparation.

Books of Travels having been mentioned, Johnson praised Pennant very highly, as he did at Dunvegan, in the Isle of Sky<sup>3</sup>. Dr. Percy, knowing himself to be the heir male of the ancient Percies<sup>4</sup>; and having the warmest and most dutiful attachment to the noble House of Northumberland, could not sit quietly and hear a man praised who had spoken disrespectfully of Alnwick Castle and the Duke's pleasure grounds,

<sup>3</sup> "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides," edit. 3d. p. 221.

<sup>4</sup> See this accurately stated, and the descent of his family from the Earls of Northumberland clearly deduced in the Reverend Dr. Nash's excellent "History of Worcestershire," vol. ii. p. 318.—The Doctor has subjoined a note, in which he says, "The Editor hath seen and carefully examined the proofs of all the particulars above-mentioned, now in the possession of the Reverend Thomas Percy."

The same proofs I have also myself carefully examined, and have seen some additional proofs which have occurred since the Doctor's book was published; and both as a Lawyer accustomed to the con-

especially as he thought meanly of his travels. He therefore opposed Johnson eagerly. JOHNSON. "Pennant in what he has said of Alnwick has done what he intended; he has made you very angry." PERCY. "He has said the garden is trim, which is representing it like a citizen's parterre, when the truth is, there is a very large extent of fine turf and gravel walks." JOHNSON. "According to your own account, sir, Pennant is right. It is trim. Here is grass cut close, and gravel rolled smooth. Is not that trim? The extent is nothing against that; a mile may be as trim as a square yard. Your extent puts me in mind of the citizen's enlarged dinner, two pieces of roast beef and two puddings. There is no variety, no mind exerted in laying out the ground, no trees." PERCY. "He pretends to give the natural history of Northumberland, and yet takes no notice of the immense number of trees planted there of late." JOHNSON. "That, sir, has nothing to do with the *natural* history; that is *civil* history. A man who gives the natural history of the oak is not to tell how many oaks have been planted in this place or that. A man who gives the natural history of the cow, is not to tell how many cows are milked at Islington. The animal is the same, whether milked in the Park or at Islington." PERCY. "Pennant does not describe well; a carrier who goes along the side of Loch-omond would describe it better." JOHNSON. "I think he describes very well." PERCY. "I tra-

sideration of evidence, and as a Genealogist versed in the study of pedigrees, I am fully satisfied. I cannot help observing, as a circumstance of no small moment, that in tracing the Bishop of Dromore's genealogy, essential aid was given by the late Elizabeth, Duchess of Northumberland, Heiress of that illustrious House; a lady not only of high dignity of spirit, such as became her noble blood, but of excellent understanding and lively talents. With a fair pride I can boast of the honour of her Grace's correspondence, specimens of which adorn my archives.

velled after him." JOHNSON. "And *I* travelled after him." PERCY. "But, my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I do." I wondered at Dr. Percy's venturing thus. Dr. Johnson said nothing at the time: but inflammable particles were collecting for a cloud to burst. In a little while Dr. Percy said something more in disparagement of Pennant. JOHNSON (pointedly). "This is the resentment of a narrow mind, because he did not find every thing in Northumberland." PERCY (feeling the stroke). "Sir, you may be as rude as you please." JOHNSON. "Hold, sir! Don't talk of rudeness; remember, sir, you told me (puffing hard with passion struggling for a vent), I was short-sighted. We have done with civility. We are to be as rude as we please." PERCY. "Upon my honour, sir, I did not mean to be uncivil." JOHNSON. "I cannot say so, sir; for I *did* mean to be uncivil, thinking *you* had been uncivil." Dr. Percy rose, ran up to him, and taking him by the hand, assured him affectionately that his meaning had been misunderstood; upon which a reconciliation instantly took place. JOHNSON. "My dear sir, I am willing you shall *hang* Pennant." PERCY (resuming the former subject). "Pennant complains that the helmet is not hung out to invite to the hall of hospitality<sup>5</sup>. Now I never heard that it was a custom to hang out a *helmet*." JOHNSON. "Hang him up, hang him up." BOSWELL (humouring the joke). "Hang out his skull instead of a hel-

<sup>5</sup> It certainly was a custom, as appears from the following passage in *Perceforest*, vol. iii. p. 108:—"faisoient mettre au plus hault de leur hostel un *heaulme*, en signe que tous les gentils hommes et gentilles femmes entrassent hardiment en leur hostel comme en leur propre," &c. K.

[The author's second son, Mr. James Boswell, late of Brazen-nose College, in Oxford, and now of the Inner Temple, had noticed this passage in *Perceforest*, and suggested to me the same remark. M.]



Mr. Pennant, like his countrymen in general, has the true spirit of a *Gentleman*. As a proof of it, I shall quote from his "London" the passage in which he speaks of my illustrious friend. "I must by no means omit *Bolt Court*, the long residence of Doctor SAMUEL JOHNSON, a man of the strongest natural abilities, great learning, a most retentive memory, of the deepest and most unaffected piety and morality, mingled with those numerous weaknesses and prejudices which his friends have kindly taken care to draw from their dread abode<sup>7</sup>. I brought on myself his transient anger, by observing that, in his tour in *Scotland*, he once had long and woful experience of oats being the food of men in *Scotland* as they were of horses in *England*. It was a national reflection, unworthy of him, and I shot my bolt. In return he gave me a tender hug<sup>8</sup>. *Con amore* he also said of me, '*The dog is a Whig*': I admired the virtues of Lord *Russel*, and pitied his fall. I should have been a Whig at the Revolution.—There have been periods since, in which I should have been, what I now am, a moderate Tory, a supporter, as far as my little influence extends, of a well poised balance between the crown and people: but should the scale preponderate against the *Salus populi*, that moment may it be said '*The dog's a Whig*!'"

We had a calm after the storm, staid the evening and supped, and were pleasant and gay. But

<sup>7</sup> This is the common cant against faithful Biography. Does the worthy gentleman mean that I, who was taught discrimination of character by Johnson, should have omitted his frailties, and, in short, have *bedaubed* him as the worthy gentleman has bedaubed Scotland? —BOSWELL.

<sup>8</sup> See Dr. Johnson's "Journey to the Western Islands," p. 296: see his Dictionary, article *oats*:—and my "Voyage to the Hebrides," first edition.—PENNANT.

<sup>9</sup> Mr. Boswell's Journal, p. 386.—PENNANT.



Dr. Percy told me he was very uneasy at what had passed; for there was a gentleman there who was acquainted with the Northumberland family, to whom he hoped to have appeared more respectable, by showing how intimate he was with Dr. Johnson, and who might now, on the contrary, go away with an opinion to his disadvantage. He begged I would mention this to Dr. Johnson, which I afterwards did. His observation upon it was, "This comes of *stratagem*; had he told me that he wished to appear to advantage before that gentleman, he should have been at the top of the house all the time." He spoke of Dr. Percy in the handsomest manner. "Then, sir (said I), may I be allowed to suggest a mode by which you may effectually counteract any unfavourable report of what passed. I will write a letter to you upon the subject of the unlucky contest of that day, and you will be kind enough to put in writing as an answer to that letter what you have now said, and as Lord Percy is to dine with us at General Paoli's soon, I will take an opportunity to read the correspondence in his Lordship's presence. This friendly scheme was accordingly carried into execution without Dr. Percy's knowledge. Johnson's letter placed Dr. Percy's unquestionable merit in the fairest point of view; and I contrived that Lord Percy should hear the correspondence, by introducing it at General Paoli's, as an instance of Dr. Johnson's kind disposition towards one in whom his Lordship was interested. Thus every unfavourable impression was obviated that could possibly have been made on those by whom he wished most to be regarded. I breakfasted the day after with him, and informed him of my scheme and its happy completion, for which he thanked me in the warmest terms, and was highly delighted with

Dr. Johnson's letter in his praise, of which I gave him a copy. He said, "I would rather have this than degrees from all the Universities in Europe. It will be for me, and my children and grandchildren." Dr. Johnson having afterwards asked me if I had given him a copy of it, and being told I had, was offended, and insisted that I should get it back, which I did. As, however, he did not desire me to destroy either the original or the copy, or forbid me to let it be seen, I think myself at liberty to apply to it his general declaration to me concerning his own letters: "That he did not choose they should be published in his life-time; but had no objection to their appearing after his death." I shall therefore insert this kindly correspondence, having faithfully narrated the circumstances accompanying it.

" TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

" MY DEAR SIR,

" I BEG leave to address you in behalf of our friend Dr. Percy, who was much hurt by what you said to him that day we dined at his house<sup>1</sup>; when, in the course of the dispute as to Pennant's merit as a traveller, you told Percy that 'he had the resentment of a narrow mind against Pennant, because he did not find every thing in Northumberland.' Percy is sensible that you did not mean to injure him; but he is vexed to think that your behaviour to him on that occasion may be interpreted as a proof that he is despised by you, which I know is not the case. I have told him that the charge of being narrow-minded was only as to the particular point in question; and that he had the merit of being a martyr to his noble family:

Sunday, April 12, 1778.

“Earl Percy is to dine with General Paoli next Friday; and I should be sincerely glad to have it in my power to satisfy his Lordship how well you think of Dr. Percy, who, I find, apprehends that your good opinion of him may be of very essential consequence; and who assures me that he has the highest respect and the warmest affection for you.

“I have only to add, that my suggesting this occasion for the exercise of your candour and generosity is altogether unknown to Dr. Percy, and proceeds from my good will towards him, and my persuasion that you will be happy to do him an essential kindness.

“I am, more and more, MY DEAR SIR,

“Your most faithful

“And affectionate humble servant,

“JAMES BOSWELL.”

“TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

“SIR,

“THE debate between Dr. Percy and me is one of those foolish controversies which begin upon a question of which neither party cares how it is decided, and which is, nevertheless, continued to acrimony; by the vanity with which every man resists confutation. Dr. Percy's warmth proceeded from a cause which, perhaps, does him more honour than he could have derived from juster criticism. His abhorrence of Pennant proceeded from his opinion that Pennant had wantonly and indecently censured his patron. His anger made him resolve that, for having been once wrong, he never should be right. Pennant has much in his notions that I do not like; but still I think him a very intelligent traveller. If Percy is really offended, I am sorry; for he is a

man whom I never knew to offend any one. He is a man very willing to learn, and very able to teach; a man, out of whose company I never go without having learned something. It is sure that he vexes me sometimes, but I am afraid it is by making me feel my own ignorance. So much extension of mind, and so much minute accuracy of inquiry, if you survey your whole circle of acquaintance, you will find so scarce, if you find it at all, that you will value Percy by comparison. Lord Hailes is somewhat like him: but Lord Hailes does not, perhaps, go beyond him in research; and I do not know that he equals him in elegance. Percy's attention to poetry has given grace and splendour to his studies of antiquity. A mere antiquarian is a rugged being.

"Upon the whole, you see that what I might say in sport or petulance to him is very consistent with full conviction of his merit.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most, &c.

"April 23, 1778."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"TO THE REVEREND DR. PERCY, NORTHUMBERLAND HOUSE.

"DEAR SIR,

"I wrote to Dr. Johnson on the subject of the *Pennantian* controversy; and have received from him an answer which will delight you. I read it yesterday to Dr. Robertson, at the Exhibition; and at dinner to Lord Percy, General Oglethorpe, &c. who dined with us at General Paoli's; who was also a witness to the high *testimony* to your honour.

"General Paoli desires the favour of your

company next Tuesday to dinner, to meet Dr. Johnson. If I can, I will call on you to-day. I am, with sincere regard,

"Your most obedient humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL<sup>2</sup>."

"South Audley Street, April 25."

On Monday, April 13, I dined with Johnson at Mr. Langton's, where were Dr. Porteus, then Bishop of Chester, now of London, and Dr. Stinton. He was at first in a very silent mood. Before dinner he said nothing but "Pretty baby" to one of the children. Langton said very well to me afterwards, that he could repeat Johnson's conversation before dinner, as Johnson had said that he could repeat a complete chapter of "The Natural History of Iceland," from the Danish of *Horrebow*, the whole of which was exactly thus:

"CHAP. LXXII. *Concerning Snakes.*

"There are no snakes to be met with throughout the whole island."

At dinner we talked of a another mode in the newspapers of giving modern characters in sentences from the classicks, and of the passage

*"Parcus deorum cultor, et infrequens,  
Insanientis dum sapientiæ  
Consultus erro, nunc retrorsum  
Vela dare, atque iterare cursus  
Cogor relictos:"*

being well applied to Soame Jenyns; who, after

<sup>2</sup> Though the Bishop of Dromore kindly answered the letters which I wrote to him relative to Dr. Johnson's early history; yet, in justice to him, I think it proper to add, that the account of the foregoing conversation, and the subsequent transaction, as well as of some other conversations in which he is mentioned, has been given to the publick without previous communication with his Lordship.

having wandered in the wilds of infidelity, had returned to the Christian faith. Mr. Langton asked Johnson as to the propriety of *sapientie consultus*. JOHNSON. "Though *consultus* was primarily an adjective, like *amicus*, it came to be used as a substantive. So we have *Juris consultus*, a consult in law."

We talked of the styles of different painters, and how certainly a connoisseur could distinguish them. I asked, if there was as clear a difference of styles in language as in painting, or even as in handwriting, so that the composition of every individual may be distinguished. JOHNSON. "Yes. Those who have a style of eminent excellence, such as Dryden and Milton, can always be distinguished." I had no doubt of this; but what I wanted to know was, whether there was really a peculiar style to every man whatever, as there is certainly a peculiar handwriting, a peculiar countenance, not widely different in many, yet always enough to be distinctive:

" ————— *facies non omnibus una,  
Nec diversa tamen.* ————

The Bishop thought not; and said, he supposed that many pieces in Dodsley's collection of poems, though all very pretty, had nothing appropriated in their style, and in that particular could not be at all distinguished. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, I think every man whatever has a peculiar style, which may be discovered by nice examination and comparison with others: but a man must write a good deal to make his style obviously discernible. As logicians say, this appropriation of style is infinite in *potestate*, limited in *actu*."

Mr. Topham Beauclerk came in the evening, and he and Dr. Johnson and I staid to supper. It was mentioned that Dr. Dodd had once wished

to be a member of the Literary Club. JOHNSON: "I should be sorry if any of our Club were hanged. I will not say but some of them deserve it."

BEAUCLERK (supposing this to be aimed at persons for whom he had at that time a wonderful fancy, which, however, did not last long) was irritated, and eagerly said, "You, sir, have a friend (naming him) who deserves to be hanged; for he speaks behind their backs against those with whom he lives on the best terms, and attacks them in the newspapers. *He* certainly ought to be kicked." JOHNSON. "Sir, we all do this in some degree: *Veniam petimus damusque vicissim.*" To be sure it may be done so much that a man may deserve to be kicked." BEAUCLERK. "He is very malignant." JOHNSON. "No, sir; he is not malignant. He is mischievous, if you will. He would do no man an essential injury; he may, indeed, love to make sport of people by vexing their vanity. I, however, once knew an old gentleman who was absolutely malignant. He really wished evil to others, and rejoiced at it." BOSWELL. "The gentleman, Mr. Beauclerk, against whom you are so violent is, I know, a man of good principles." BEAUCLERK. "Then he does not wear them out in practice."

Dr. Johnson, who, as I have observed before, delighted in discrimination of character, and having a masterly knowledge of human nature, was willing to take men as they are, imperfect, and with a mixture of good and bad qualities; I suppose thought he had said enough in defence of his friend, of whose merits, notwithstanding his exceptionable points, he had a just value, and added no more on the subject.

On Tuesday, April 14, I dined with him at General Ogleshorpe's, with General Paoli and

Mr. Langton. General Oglethorpe declaimed against luxury. JOHNSON. "Depend upon it, sir, every state of society is as luxurious as it can be. Men always take the best they can get." OGLETHORPE. "But the best depends much upon ourselves; and if we can be as well satisfied with plain things, we are in the wrong to accustom our palates to what is high-seasoned and expensive. What says Addison in his 'Cato,' speaking of the Numidian?

Coarse are his meals, the fortune of the chase;  
Amid the running stream he slakes his thirst;  
Toils all the day; and, at the approach of night,  
On the first friendly bank he throws him down,  
Or rests his head upon a rock till morn;  
And if the following day he chance to find  
A new repast, or an untasted spring,  
Blesses his stars, and thinks it luxury."

Let us have *that* kind of luxury, sir, if you will."

JOHNSON. "But hold, sir; to be merely satisfied is not enough. It is in refinement and elegance that the civilized man differs from the savage. A great part of our industry and all our ingenuity is exercised in procuring pleasure; and, sir, a hungry man has not the same pleasure in eating a plain dinner that a hungry man has in eating a luxurious dinner. You see I put the case fairly. A hungry man may have as much, nay, more pleasure in eating a plain dinner than a man grown fastidious has in eating a luxurious dinner. But I suppose the man who decides between the two dinners to be equally a hungry man."

Talking of different governments,—JOHNSON. "The more contracted power is, the more easily it is destroyed. A country governed by a despot is an inverted cone. Government there cannot be so firm as when it rests upon a broad basis gradually contracted, as the government of Great Britain, which is founded on the parliament; then



is in the privy council, then in the King." BOSWELL. "Power, when contracted into the person of a despot, may be easily destroyed, as the prince may be cut off. So Caligula wished that the people of Rome had but one neck, that he might cut them off at a blow." OGLETHORPE. "It was of the Senate he wished that. The Senate, by its usurpation, controled both the Emperour and the people. And don't you think that we see too much of that in our own parliament?"

Dr. Johnson endeavoured to trace the etymology of Maccaronick verses, which he thought were of Italian invention from Maccaroni; but on being informed that this would infer that they were the most common and easy verses, maccaroni being the most ordinary and simple food, he was at a loss; for he said, "He rather should have supposed it to import in its primitive signification, a composition of several things<sup>4</sup>; for Maccaronick verses are verses made out of a mixture of different languages, that is, of one language with the termination of another." I suppose we scarcely know of a language in any country where there is any learning, in which that motley ludicrous species of composition may not be found. It is particularly droll in Low Dutch. The "*Polemo-middinia*" of Drummond of Hawthornden, in which there is a jumble of many languages moulded, as if it were all in Latin, is well known. Mr. Langton made us laugh hear-

<sup>4</sup> [Dr. Johnson was right in supposing that this kind of poetry derived its name from *maccherone*. "Ars ista poetica (says Merlin Coccaic, whose true name was Theophilo Polengo), nuncupatur ARS MACCARONICA, a *macaronibus* derivata; qui *macarones* sunt quoddam pulmentum, farina, caseo, butyro compaginaturn, grossum, rude, et rusticum. Ideo MACCARONICA nil nisi grossedinem, ruditatem, et VOCABULAZZOS debet in se continere." Warton's Hist. of Eng. Poet. ii. 357. M.]

tily at one in the Grecian mould, by Joshua Barnes, in which are to be found such comical *Anglo-hellenisms* as *Κλυββοισιν εβανχθεν*: they were banged with clubs.

On Wednesday, April 15, I dined with Dr. Johnson at Mr. Dilly's, and was in high spirits, for I had been a good part of the morning with Mr. Orme, the able and eloquent historian of Hindostan, who expressed a great admiration of Johnson. "I do not care (said he) on what subject Johnson talks; but I love better to hear him talk than any body. He either gives you new thoughts or a new colouring. It is a shame to the nation that he has not been more liberally rewarded. Had I been George the Third, and thought as he did about America, I would have given Johnson three hundred a year for his 'Taxation no Tyranny,' alone." I repeated this, and Johnson was much pleased with such praise from such a man as Orme.

At Mr. Dilly's to-day were Mrs. Knowles, the ingenious Quaker lady<sup>b</sup>, Miss Seward, the poetess of Lichfield, the Reverend Dr. Mayo, and the Rev. Mr. Beresford, Tutor to the Duke of Bedford. Before dinner Dr. Johnson seized upon Mr. Charles Sheridan's<sup>c</sup> "Account of the late Revolution in Sweden," and seemed to read it ravenously, as if he devoured it, which was to all appearance his method of studying. "He knows how to read better than any one (said Mrs. Knowles); he gets at the substance of a book directly; he tears out the heart of it." He kept it wrapt up in the table cloth in his lap during the time of dinner, from an avidity to have one enter-

<sup>b</sup> Dr. Johnson, describing her needle-work in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale, uses the learned word *sutile*; which Mrs. Thrale has mistaken, and made the phrase injurious by writing "*futile* pictures."

<sup>c</sup> [The older brother of R. B. Sheridan, Esq. He died in 1806. M.]



Cookery I shall make: I shall agree with Mr. Dilly for the copyright." MISS SEWARD. "That would be Hercules with the distaff indeed." JOHNSON. "No, madam. Women can spin very well; but they cannot make a good book of Cookery."

JOHNSON. "O! Mr. Dilly—you must know that an English Benedictine Monk at Paris has translated 'The Duke of Berwick's Mémoires,' from the original French, and has sent them to me to sell. I offered them to Strahan, who sent them back with this answer:—'That the first book he had published was the Duke of Berwick's Life; by which he had lost: and he hated the name.'—Now I honestly tell you that Strahan has refused them; but I also honestly tell you that he did it upon no principle, for he never looked into them." DILLY. "Are they well translated, sir?"

JOHNSON. "Why, sir, very well—in a style very current and very clear. I have written to the Benedictine to give me an answer upon two points:—What evidence is there that the letters are authentick? (for if they are not authentick, they are nothing);—And how long will it be before the original French is published? For if the French edition is not to appear for a considerable time, the translation will be almost as valuable as an original book. They will make two volumes in octavo; and I have undertaken to correct every sheet as it comes from the press." Mr. Dilly desired to see them, and said he would send for them. He asked Dr. Johnson if he would write a Preface to them. JOHNSON. "No, sir. The Benedictines were very kind to me, and I'll do what I undertook to do; but I will not mingle my name with them. I am to gain nothing by them. I'll turn them loose upon the world, and let them take their chance." DR. MAYO. "Pray, sir, are Ganganelli's letters authentick?"

JOHNSON. "No, sir. Voltaire put the same question to the editor of them that I did to Macpherson—Where are the originals?"

Mrs. Knowles affected to complain that men had much more liberty allowed them than women.

JOHNSON. "Why, madam, women have all the liberty they should wish to have. We have all the labour and the danger, and the women all the advantage. We go to sea, we build houses,

we do every thing, in short, to pay our court to the women." MRS. KNOWLES. "The Doctor

reasons very wittily, but not convincingly. Now,

take the instance of building; the mason's wife, if she is ever seen in liquor, is ruined; the mason

may get himself drunk as often as he pleases, with little loss of character; nay, may let his

wife and children starve." JOHNSON. "Madam,

you must consider, if the mason does get himself drunk, and let his wife and children starve, the

parish will oblige him to find security for their maintenance. We have different modes of re-

straining evil. Stocks for the men, a ducking stool for women, and a pound for beasts. If we

require more perfection from women than from ourselves, it is doing them honour. And women

have not the same temptations that we have; they may always live in virtuous company; men must

mix in the world indiscriminately. If a woman has no inclination to do what is wrong, being se-

cured from it is no restraint to her. I am at liberty to walk into the Thames; but if I were to

try it, my friends would restrain me in Bedlam, and I should be obliged to them." MRS. KNOWLES.

"Still, Doctor, I cannot help thinking it a hardship that more indulgence is allowed to men than to women. It gives a superiority to men, to which

I do not see how they are entitled." JOHNSON.

"It is plain, madam, one or other must have the

superiority. As Shakspeare says, 'If two men ride on a horse, one must ride behind.'" DILLY.

"I suppose, sir, Mrs. Knowles would have them ride in panniers, one on each side." JOHNSON.

"Then, sir, the horse would throw them both."

MRS. KNOWLES. "Well, I hope that in another world the sexes will be equal." BOSWELL.

"That is being too ambitious, madam. *We* might as well desire to be equal with the angels. We shall all, I hope, be happy in a future state, but we must not expect to be all happy in the same degree. It is enough if we be happy according to our several capacities. A worthy carman will get to heaven as well as Sir Isaac Newton. Yet, though equally good, they will not have the same degrees of happiness." JOHNSON. "Probably not<sup>8</sup>."

Upon this subject I had once before sounded him, by mentioning the late Reverend Mr. Brown of Utrecht's image; that a great and small glass, though equally full, did not hold an equal quantity; which he threw out to refute David Hume's saying, that a little miss, going to dance at a ball, in a fine new dress, was as happy as a great orator, after having made an eloquent and applauded speech. After some thought, Johnson said<sup>9</sup>, "I come over to the parson." As an instance of coincidence of thinking, Mr. Dilly told me that Dr. King, a late dissenting minister in London, said to him, upon the happiness in a future state of good men of different capacities, "A pail does not hold so much as a tub; but if it be equally full, it has no reason to complain. Every Saint in heaven will have as much happiness as

<sup>8</sup> [See on this question Bishop Hall's Epistles, Dec. iii. Epist. 6, "Of the different degrees of heavenly glory, and of our mutual knowledge of each other above." M.]

<sup>9</sup> [See vol. ii. p. 19, where also this subject is discussed. M.]

he can hold." Mr. Dilly thought this a clear, though a familiar illustration of the phrase, "One star differeth from another in brightness."

Dr. Mayo having asked Johnson's opinion of Soame Jenyns's "View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion;"—JOHNSON. "I think it a pretty book; not very theological indeed; and there seems to be an affectation of ease and carelessness, as if it were not suitable to his character to be very serious about the matter." BOSWELL. "He may have intended this to introduce his book the better among genteel people, who might be unwilling to read too grave a treatise. There is a general levity in the age. We have physicians now with bag wigs; may we not have airy divines, at least somewhat less solemn in their appearance than they used to be?" JOHNSON. "Jenyns might mean as you say." BOSWELL. "You should like his book, Mrs. Knowles, as it maintains, as you *friends* do, that courage is not a Christian virtue." MRS. KNOWLES. "Yes, indeed, I like him there; but I cannot agree with him that friendship is not a Christian virtue." JOHNSON. "Why, madam, strictly speaking, he is right. All friendship is preferring the interest of a friend to the neglect, or perhaps, against the interest of others; so that an old Greek said, 'He that has *friends* has *no friend*.' Now Christianity recommends universal benevolence,—to consider all men as our brethren; which is contrary to the virtue of friendship, as described by the ancient philosophers. Surely, madam, your sect must approve of this; for you call all men *friends*." MRS. KNOWLES. "We are commanded to do good to all men, 'but especially to them who are of the household of Faith.'" JOHNSON. "Well, madam. The household of Faith is wide enough." MRS. KNOWLES. "But, Doctor, our Saviour had

twelve Apostles, yet there was *one* whom he *loved*. John was called 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.'"

JOHNSON. (with eyes sparkling benignantly). "Very well, indeed, madam. You have said very well." BOSWELL. "A fine application. Pray, sir, had you ever thought of it?" JOHNSON. "I had not, sir."

From this pleasing subject, he, I know not how or why, made a sudden transition to one upon which he was a violent aggressor; for he said, "I am willing to love all mankind *except an American*;" and his inflammable corruption bursting into horrid fire, he "breathed out threatenings and slaughter;" calling them "Rascals—Robbers—Pirates;" and exclaiming, he'd "burn and destroy them." Miss Seward, looking to him with mild but steady astonishment, said, "Sir, this is an instance that we are always most violent against those whom we have injured."—He was irritated still more by this delicate and keen reproach; and roared out another tremendous volley, which one might fancy could be heard across the Atlantick. During this tempest I sat in great uneasiness, lamenting his heat of temper; till, by degrees, I diverted his attention to other topicks.

DR. MAYO (to Dr. Johnson). "Pray, sir, have you read Edwards, of New England, on Grace?"

JOHNSON. "No, sir." BOSWELL. "It puzzled me so much as to the freedom of the human will, by stating, with wonderful acute ingenuity, our being actuated by a series of motives which we cannot resist, that the only relief I had was to forget it."

MAYO. "But he makes the proper distinction between moral and physical necessity." BOSWELL.

"Alas, sir, they come both to the same thing. You may be bound as hard by chains when covered by leather as when the iron appears. The argument for the moral necessity of human



actions is always, I observe, fortified by supposing universal prescience to be one of the attributes of the Deity." JOHNSON. "You are surer that you are free than you are of prescience; you are surer that you can lift up your finger or not as you please than you are of any conclusion from a deduction of reasoning. But let us consider a little the objection from prescience. It is certain I am either to go home to-night or not; that does not prevent my freedom." BOSWELL. "That it is certain you are *either* to go home or not does not prevent your freedom: because the liberty of choice between the two is compatible with that certainty. But if *one* of these events be certain *now*, you have no *future* power of volition. If it be certain you are to go home to-night, you *must* go home." JOHNSON. "If I am well acquainted with a man, I *can* judge with great probability how he will act in any case, without his being restrained by my judging. God may have this probability increased to certainty." BOSWELL. "When it is increased to *certainty* freedom ceases, because that cannot be certainly foreknown which is not certain at the time; but if it be certain at the time, it is a contradiction in terms to maintain that there can be afterwards any *contingency* dependent upon the exercise of will or any thing else." JOHNSON. "All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it."—I did not push the subject any farther. I was glad to find him so mild in discussing a question of the most abstract nature, involved with theological tenets, which he generally would not suffer to be in any degree opposed<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> If any of my readers are disturbed by this thorny question, I beg leave to recommend to them Letter 69 of Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*; and the late Mr. John Palmer of Islington's Answer to Dr. Priestley's mechanical arguments for what he absurdly calls "Philosophical necessity."

He, as usual, defended luxury: "You cannot spend money in luxury without doing good to the poor. Nay, you do more good to them by spending it in luxury, you make them exert industry, whereas by giving it, you keep them idle. I own, indeed, there may be more virtue in giving it immediately in charity than in spending it in luxury; though there may be pride in that too." Miss Seward asked, if this was not Mandeville's doctrine of "private vices publick benefits." JOHNSON. "The fallacy of that book is, that Mandeville defines neither vices nor benefits. He reckons among vices every thing that gives pleasure. He takes the narrowest system of morality, monastick morality, which holds pleasure itself to be a vice, such as eating salt with our fish, because it makes it eat better; and he reckons wealth as a publick benefit, which is by no means always true. Pleasure of itself is not a vice. Having a garden, which we all know to be perfectly innocent, is a great pleasure. At the same time, in this state of being there are many pleasures vices, which however are so immediately agreeable that we can hardly abstain from them. The happiness of Heaven will be, that pleasure and virtue will be perfectly consistent. Mandeville puts the case of a man who gets drunk at an alehouse; and says it is a publick benefit, because so much money is got by it to the publick. But it must be considered, that all the good gained by this, through the gradation of alehouse-keeper, brewer, maltster, and farmer, is overbalanced by the evil caused to the man and his family by his getting drunk. This is the way to try what is vicious, by ascertaining whether more evil than good is produced by it upon the whole, which is the case in all vice. It may happen that good is produced by vice, but not as vice; for instance, a

robber may take money from its owner, and give it to one who will make a better use of it. Here is good produced; but not by the robbery as robbery, but as translation of property. I read Mandeville forty, or, I believe, fifty years ago. He did not puzzle me; he opened my views into real life very much. No, it is clear that the happiness of society depends on virtue. In Sparta, theft was allowed by general consent: theft, therefore, was *there* not a crime, but then there was no security; and what a life must they have had, when there was no security. Without truth there must be a dissolution of society. As it is, there is so little truth, that we are almost afraid to trust our ears; but how should we be, if falsehood were multiplied ten times! Society is held together by communication and information; and I remember this remark of Sir Thomas Brown's 'Do the devils lie? No; for then Hell could not subsist.'

Talking of Miss ———, a literary lady, he said, "I was obliged to speak to Miss Reynolds, to let her know that I desired she would not flatter me so much." Somebody now observed, "She flatters Garrick." JOHNSON. "She is in the right to flatter Garrick. She is in the right for two reasons: first, because she has the world with her, who have been praising Garrick these thirty years; and secondly, because she is rewarded for it by Garrick. Why should she flatter *me*? I can do nothing for her. Let her carry her praise to a better market. (Then turning to Mrs. Knowles.) You, madam, have been flattering me all the evening; I wish you would give Boswell a little now. If you knew his merit as well as I do, you would say a great deal; he is the best travelling companion in the world."

Somebody mentioned the Reverend Mr. Ma-

son's prosecution of Mr. Murray, the bookseller, for having inserted in a collection of "Gray's Poems," only fifty lines, of which Mr. Mason had still the exclusive property, under the statute of Queen Anne; and that Mr. Mason had persevered, notwithstanding his being requested to name his own terms of compensation<sup>2</sup>. Johnson signified his displeasure at Mr. Mason's conduct very strongly; but added, by way of showing that he was not surprised at it, "Mason's a Whig." MRS. KNOWLES (not hearing distinctly). "What! a Prig, sir?" JOHNSON. "Worse, madam; a Whig! But he is both."

I expressed a horror at the thought of death. MRS. KNOWLES. "Nay, thou shouldst not have a horror for what is the gate of life." JOHNSON (standing upon the hearth rolling about, with a serious, solemn, and somewhat gloomy air). "No rational man can die without uneasy apprehension." MRS. KNOWLES. "The Scriptures tell us, 'The righteous shall have *hope* in his death.'"  
JOHNSON. "Yes, madam; that is, he shall not have despair. But, consider, his hope of salvation must be founded on the terms on which it is promised that the mediation of our SAVIOUR shall be applied to us,—namely, obedience; and where obedience has failed, then, as suppletory to it, repentance. But what man can say that his obedience has been such as he would approve of in another, or even in himself upon close examination, or that his repentance has not been such as to require being repented of? No man can be sure that his obedience and repentance will obtain salvation." MRS. KNOWLES. "But divine intimation of acceptance may be made to the soul." JOHNSON. "Madam, it may; but I should

<sup>2</sup> See "A Letter to W. Mason, A. M. from J. Murray, Bookseller in London;" 2d edition, p. 20.

not think the better of a man who should tell me on his deathbed, he was sure of salvation. A man cannot be sure himself that he has divine intimation of acceptance; much less can he make others sure that he has it." BOSWELL: "Then, sir, we must be contented to acknowledge that death is a terrible thing." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir. I have made no approaches to a state which can look on it as not terrible." MRS. KNOWLES (seeming to enjoy a pleasing serenity in the persuasion of benignant divine light). "Does not St. Paul say, 'I have fought the good fight of faith, I have finished my course; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of life?'" JOHNSON. "Yes, madam; but here was a man inspired, a man who had been converted by supernatural interposition." BOSWELL. "In prospect death is dreadful; but in fact we find that people die easy." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, most people have not *thought* much of the matter, so cannot *say* much, and it is supposed they die easy. Few believe it certain they are then to die; and those who do set themselves to behave with resolution, as a man does who is going to be hanged:—he is not the less unwilling to be hanged." MISS SEWARD. "There is one mode of the fear of death, which is certainly absurd: and that is the dread of annihilation, which is only a pleasing sleep without a dream." JOHNSON. "It is neither pleasing, nor sleep; it is nothing. Now mere existence is so much better than nothing that one would rather exist even in pain than not exist." BOSWELL. "If annihilation be nothing, then existing in pain is not a comparative state, but is a positive evil, which I cannot think we should choose. I must be allowed to differ here; and it would lessen the hope of a future state founded on the argument, that the Supreme Being, who is good as he is

great, will hereafter compensate for our present sufferings in this life. For if existence, such as we have it here, be comparatively a good, we have no reason to complain, though no more of it should be given to us. But if our only state of existence were in this world, then we might with some reason complain that we are so dissatisfied with our enjoyments compared with our desires."

JOHNSON. "The lady confounds annihilation, which is nothing, with the apprehension of it, which is dreadful. It is in the apprehension of it that the horror of annihilation consists."

Of John Wesley he said, "He can talk well on any subject." BOSWELL. "Pray, sir, what has he made of his story of a ghost?" JOHNSON.

"Why, sir, he believes it; but not on sufficient authority. He did not take time enough to examine the girl. It was at Newcastle, where the ghost was said to have appeared to a young woman several times, mentioning something about the right to an old house, advising application to be made to an attorney, which was done; and, at the same time, saying the attorney would do nothing, which proved to be the fact. 'This (says John) is a proof that a ghost knows our thoughts.'

Now (laughing) it is not necessary to know our thoughts, to tell that an attorney will sometimes do nothing. Charles Wesley, who is a more stationary man, does not believe the story. I am sorry that John did not take more pains to inquire into the evidence for it." MISS SEWARD (with an incredulous smile).

"What, sir! about a ghost?" JOHNSON (with solemn vehemence). "Yes, madam: this is a question which, after five thousand years, is yet undecided: a question, whether in theology or philosophy, one of the most important that can come before the human understanding."

Mrs. Knowles mentioned, as a proselyte to Quakerism, Miss ———, a young lady well known to Dr. Johnson, for whom he had shown much affection; while she ever had, and still retained; a great respect for him. Mrs. Knowles at the same time took an opportunity of letting him know “that the amiable young creature was sorry at finding that he was offended at her leaving the Church of England, and embracing a simpler faith;” and, in the gentlest and most persuasive manner, solicited his kind indulgence for what was sincerely a matter of conscience. JOHNSON (frowning very angrily). “Madam, she is an odious wench. She could not have any proper conviction that it was her duty to change her religion; which is the most important of all subjects, and should be studied with all care, and with all the helps we can get. She knew no more of the Church which she left, and that which she embraced; than she did of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaick systems.” MRS. KNOWLES. “She had the New Testament before her.” JOHNSON. “Madam, she could not understand the New Testament, the most difficult book in the world, for which the study of a life is required.” MRS. KNOWLES. “It is clear as to essentials.” JOHNSON. “But not as to controversial points. The heathens were easily converted, because they had nothing to give up; but we ought not, without very strong conviction indeed, to desert the religion in which we have been educated. That is the religion given you, the religion in which it may be said Providence has placed you. If you live conscientiously in that religion, you may be safe. But error is dangerous indeed, if you err when you choose a religion for yourself.” MRS. KNOWLES. “Must we then go by implicit faith?” JOHNSON. “Why,

madam, the greatest part of our knowledge is implicit faith; and as to religion, have we heard all that a disciple of Confucius, all that a Mahometan, can say for himself?" He then rose again into passion, and attacked the young proselyte in the severest terms of reproach, so that both the ladies seemed to be much shocked<sup>3</sup>.

We remained together till it was pretty late. Notwithstanding occasional explosions of violence, we were all delighted upon the whole with Johnson. I compared him at this time to a warm West Indian climate, where you have a bright sun, quick vegetation, luxuriant foliage, luscious fruits; but where the same heat sometimes produces thunder, lightning, earthquakes, in a terrible degree.

April 17, being Good Friday, I waited on Johnson, as usual. I observed at breakfast that although it was a part of his abstemious discipline on this most solemn fast, to take no milk in his tea, yet when Mrs. Desmoulins inadvertently poured it in, he did not reject it. I talked of the strange indecision of mind and imbecility in the common occurrences of life, which we may observe in some people. JOHNSON. "Why, sir,

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Knowles, not satisfied with the fame of her needlework, the "*subtle pictures*" mentioned by Johnson, in which she has indeed displayed much dexterity, nay, with the fame of reasoning better than women generally do; as I have fairly shown her to have done, communicated to me a Dialogue of considerable length, which after many years had elapsed, she wrote down as having passed between Dr. Johnson and her at this interview. As I had not the least recollection of it, and did not find the smallest trace of it in my *Record* taken at the time, I could not in consistency, with my firm regard to authenticity, insert it in my work. It has, however, been published in "*The Gentleman's Magazine*" for June 1791. It chiefly relates to the principles of the sect called *Quakers*; and no doubt the lady appears to have greatly the advantage of Dr. Johnson in argument as well as expression. From what I have now stated, and from the internal evidence of the paper itself, any one who may have the curiosity to peruse it will judge whether it was wrong in me to reject it, however willing to gratify Mrs. Knowles.



I am in the habit of getting others to do things for me." BOSWELL. "What, sir! have you that weakness?" JOHNSON. "Yes, sir. But I always think afterwards I should have done better for myself."

I told him that at a gentleman's house where there was thought to be such extravagance or bad management that he was living much beyond his income, his lady had objected to the cutting of a pickled mango, and that I had taken an opportunity to ask the price of it, and found it was only two shillings; so here was a very poor saving. JOHNSON. "Sir, that is the blundering economy of a narrow understanding. It is stopping one hole in a sieve."

I expressed some inclination to publish an account of my *Travels* upon the continent of Europe, for which I had a variety of materials collected. JOHNSON. "I do not say, sir, you may not publish your travels; but I give you my opinion, that you would lessen yourself by it. What can you tell of countries so well known as those upon the continent of Europe, which you have visited?" BOSWELL. "But I can give an entertaining narrative, with many incidents, anecdotes, *jeux d'esprit*, and remarks, so as to make very pleasant reading." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, most modern travellers in Europe who have published their travels have been laughed at: I would not have you added to the number<sup>4</sup>. The world is now not contented to be merely entertained by a traveller's narrative; they want to learn something. Now some of my friends asked me, why I did not give some account of my travels in France. The reason is plain; intelligent rea-

<sup>4</sup> I believe, however, I shall follow my own opinion; for the world has shown a very flattering partiality to my writings, on many occasions.

ders had seen more of France than I had. *You* might have liked my Travels in France, and the Club might have liked them; but upon the whole, there would have been more ridicule than good produced by them." BOSWELL. "I cannot agree with you, sir. People would like to read what you say of any thing. Suppose a face has been painted by fifty painters before; still we love to see it done by Sir Joshua." JOHNSON. "True, sir, but Sir Joshua cannot paint a face when he has not time to look on it." BOSWELL. "Sir, a sketch of any sort by him is valuable. And, sir, to talk to you in your own style (raising my voice, and shaking my head), you *should* have given us your Travels in France. I am *sure* I am right; and *there's an end on't*."

I said to him that it was certainly true, as my friend Dempster had observed in his letter to me upon the subject, that a great part of what was in his "Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland," had been in his mind before he left London. JOHNSON. "Why, yes, sir, the topicks were; and books of travels will be good in proportion to what a man has previously in his mind; his knowing what to observe; his power of contrasting one mode of life with another. As the Spanish proverb says, 'He, who would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry the wealth of the Indies with him.' So it is in travelling; a man must carry knowledge with him, if he would bring home knowledge." BOSWELL. "The proverb, I suppose, sir, means, he must carry a large stock with him to trade with." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir."

It was a delightful day: as we walked to St. Clement's church, I again remarked that Fleet Street was the most cheerful scene in the world. "Fleet Street (said I) is in my mind more delight-

ful than Tempé." JOHNSON. "Ay, sir; but let it be compared with Mull."

There was a very numerous congregation to-day at St. Clement's church, which Dr. Johnson said he observed with pleasure.

And now I am to give a pretty full account of one of the most curious incidents in Johnson's life, of which he himself has made the following minute on this day: "In my return from church, I was accosted by Edwards, an old fellow collegian, who had not seen me since 1729. He knew me and asked if I remembered one Edwards; I did not at first recollect the name, but gradually, as we walked along, recovered it, and told him a conversation that had passed at an alehouse between us. My purpose is to continue our acquaintance."

It was in Butcher Row that this meeting happened. Mr. Edwards, who was a decent looking elderly man in gray clothes, and a wig of many curls, accosted Johnson with familiar confidence, knowing who he was, while Johnson returned his salutation with a courteous formality, as to a stranger. But as soon as Edwards had brought to his recollection their having been at Pembroke College together nine-and-forty years ago, he seemed much pleased, asked where he lived, and said he should be glad to see him in Bolt Court. EDWARDS. "Ah, sir! we are old men now." JOHNSON (who never liked to think of being old). "Don't let us discourage one another." EDWARDS. "Why, Doctor, you look stout and hearty: I am happy to see you so; for the newspapers told us you were very ill." JOHNSON. "Ay, sir, they are always telling lies of *us old fellows*."

Wishing to be present at more of so singular a conversation as that between two fellow colle-

gians, who had lived forty years in London without ever having chanced to meet, I whispered to Mr. Edwards that Dr. Johnson was going home, and that he had better accompany him now. So Edwards walked along with us, I eagerly assisting to keep up the conversation. Mr. Edwards informed Dr. Johnson that he had practised long as a solicitor in Chancery, but that he now lived in the country upon a little farm, about sixty acres, just by Stevenage, in Hertfordshire, and that he came to London (to Barnard's Inn, No. 6), generally twice a week. Johnson appearing to me in a reverie, Mr. Edwards addressed himself to me, and expatiated on the pleasure of living in the country. BOSWELL. "I have no notion of this, sir. What you have to entertain you is, I think, exhausted in half an hour." EDWARDS. "What? don't you love to have hope realized? I see my grass, and my corn, and my trees growing. Now, for instance, I am curious to see if this frost has not nipped my fruit trees." JOHNSON (who we did not imagine was attending): "You find, sir, you have fears as well as hopes."—So well did he see the whole, when another saw but the half of a subject.

When we got to Dr. Johnson's house, and were seated in his library, the dialogue went on admirably. EDWARDS. "Sir, I remember you would not let us say *prodigious* at College. For even then, sir (turning to me), he was delicate in language, and we all feared him<sup>6</sup>." JOHNSON (to Edwards). "From your having practised the law long, sir, I presume you must be rich." EDWARDS. "No, sir; I got a good deal of money; but I had a number of poor relations to whom I gave a great

<sup>6</sup> Johnson said to me afterwards, "Sir, they respected me for literature; and yet it was not great but by comparison. Sir, it is amazing how little literature there is in the world."

part of it." JOHNSON. "Sir, you have been rich in the most valuable sense of the word." EDWARDS. "But I shall not die rich." JOHNSON. "Nay, sure, sir, it is better to *live* rich than to *die* rich." EDWARDS. "I wish I had continued at College." JOHNSON. "Why do you wish that, sir?" EDWARDS. "Because I think I should have had a much easier life than mine has been. I should have been a parson, and had a good living, like Bloxham and several others, and lived comfortably." JOHNSON. "Sir, the life of a parson, of a conscientious clergyman, is not easy. I have always considered a clergyman as the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. I would rather have Chancery suits upon my hands than the cure of souls. No, sir, I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life." Here taking himself up all of a sudden, he exclaimed, "O! Mr. Edwards! I'll convince you that I recollect you. Do you remember our drinking together at an alehouse near Pembroke gate? At that time you told me of the Eton boy, who, when verses on our SAVIOUR's turning water into wine were prescribed as an exercise, brought up a single line, which was highly admired:

'Vidit et erubuit lymphæ pudica DEUM?'

and I told you of another fine line in 'Camden's Remains,' a eulogy upon one of our Kings, who was succeeded by his son, a prince of equal merit:

7 [This line has frequently been attributed to Dryden, when a King's Scholar at Westminster. But neither Eton nor Westminster have, in truth, any claim to it, the line being borrowed, with a slight change (as Mr. Bindley has observed to me), from an Epigram by Crashaw, which was published in his "Epigrammata Sacra," first printed at Cambridge without the author's name, in 1634, 8vo.—The original is much more elegant than the copy, the water being per-

‘Mira cano, Sol occubuit, nox nulla secuta est.’”

EDWARDS. “You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don’t know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in.”—Mr. Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Courtenay, Mr. Malone, and, indeed, all the eminent men to whom I have mentioned this, have thought it an exquisite trait of character. The truth is, that philosophy, like religion, is too generally supposed to be hard and severe, at least so grave as to exclude all gaiety.

EDWARDS. “I have been twice married, Doctor. You, I suppose, have never known what it was to have a wife.” JOHNSON. “Sir, I have known what it was to have a wife, and (in a solemn, tender, faltering tone), I have known what it was to *lose a wife*.—It had almost broke my heart.”

EDWARDS. “How do you live, sir? For my part, I must have my regular meals, and a glass of good wine. I find I require it.” JOHNSON. “I now drink no wine, sir. Early in life I drank wine: for many years I drank none. I then for some years drank a great deal.” EDWARDS. “Some hogsheads, I warrant you.” JOHNSON. “I then had a severe illness, and left it off, and I have never begun it again. I never felt any difference upon myself from eating one thing rather than another, nor from one kind of weather rather than another. There are people, I believe, who feel a

sonified, and the word on which the point of the Epigram turns being reserved to the close of the line:

“JOANN. 2.

Aquæ in vinum versæ.

Unde rubor vestris et non sua purpura lymphis?

Quæ rosa mirantes tam nova mutat aquas!

Numen, convivæ, præsens agnoscite numen,

Nympha pudica Deum vidit, et *erubuit*.” M.]

difference, but I am not one of them. And as to regular meals, I have fasted from the Sunday's dinner to the Tuesday's dinner without any inconvenience. I believe it is best to eat just as one is hungry: but a man who is in business, or a man who has a family, must have stated meals. I am a straggler. I may leave this town and go to Grand Cairo without being missed here or observed there." EDWARDS. "Don't you eat supper, sir?" JOHNSON. "No, sir." EDWARDS. "For my part, now, I consider supper as a turnpike through which one must pass in order to get to bed<sup>s</sup>."

JOHNSON. "You are a lawyer, Mr. Edwards. Lawyers know life practically. A bookish man should always have them to converse with. They have what he wants." EDWARDS. "I am grown old: I am sixty-five." JOHNSON. "I shall be sixty-eight next birthday. Come, sir, drink water, and put in for a hundred."

Mr. Edwards mentioned a gentleman who had left his whole fortune to Pembroke College. JOHNSON. "Whether to leave one's whole fortune to a College be right must depend upon circumstances. I would leave the interest of the fortune I bequeathed to a College to my relations or my friends for their lives. It is the same thing to a College, which is a permanent society, whether it gets the money now or twenty years hence; and I would wish to make my relations or friends feel the benefit of it."

This interview confirmed my opinion of Johnson's most humane and benevolent heart. His cordial and placid behaviour to an old fellow collegian, a man so different from himself; and his telling him that he would go down to his farm

\* I am not absolutely sure but this was my own suggestion, though it is truly in the character of Edwards.

and visit him, showed a kindness of disposition very rare at an advanced age. He observed, "how wonderful it was that they had both been in London forty years, without having ever once met, and both walkers in the street too!" Mr. Edwards, when going away, again recurred to his consciousness of senility, and looking full in Johnson's face, said to him, "You'll find in Dr. Young,

*'O my coevals! remnants of yourselves.'*"

Johnson did not relish this at all; but shook his head with impatience. Edwards walked off seemingly highly pleased with the honour of having been thus noticed by Dr. Johnson. When he was gone, I said to Johnson, I thought him but a weak man. JOHNSON. "Why, yes, sir. Here is a man who has passed through life without experience; yet I would rather have him with me than a more sensible man who will not talk readily. This man is always willing to say what he has to say." Yet Dr. Johnson had himself by no means that willingness which he praised so much, and I think so justly; for who has not felt the painful effect of the dreary void, when there is a total silence in a company, for any length of time; or, which is as bad, or perhaps worse, when the conversation is with difficulty kept up by a perpetual effort.

Johnson once observed to me, "Tom Tyers described me the best: 'Sir (said he), you are like a ghost: you never speak till you are spoken to.'"

The gentleman whom he thus familiarly mentioned was Mr. Thomas Tyers, son of Mr. Jonathan Tyers, the founder of that excellent place of publick amusement, Vauxhall Gardens, which must ever be an estate to its proprietor, as it is



peculiarly adapted to the taste of the English nation; there being a mixture of curious show,—gay exhibition,—musick, vocal and instrumental, not too refined for the general ear;—for all which only a shilling is paid<sup>9</sup>; and, though last, not least, good eating and drinking for those who choose to purchase that regale. Mr. Thomas Tyers was bred to the law; but having a handsome fortune, vivacity of temper, and eccentricity of mind, he could not confine himself to the regularity of practice. He therefore ran about the world with a pleasant carelessness, amusing every body by his desultory conversation. He abounded in anecdote, but was not sufficiently attentive to accuracy. I therefore cannot venture to avail myself much of a biographical sketch of Johnson which he published, being one among the various persons ambitious of appending their names to that of my illustrious friend. That sketch is, however, an entertaining little collection of fragments. Those which he published of Pope and Addison are of higher merit; but his fame must chiefly rest upon his “Political Conferences,” in which he introduces several eminent persons delivering their sentiments in the way of dialogue, and discovers a considerable share of learning, various knowledge, and discernment of character. This much may I be allowed to say of a man who was exceedingly obliging to me, and who lived with Dr. Johnson in as easy a manner as almost any of his very numerous acquaintance.

<sup>9</sup> In summer, 1792, additional and more expensive decorations having been introduced, the price of admission was raised to two shillings. I cannot approve of this. The company may be more select; but a number of the honest commonalty are, I fear, excluded from sharing in elegant and innocent entertainment. An attempt to abolish the one shilling gallery at the playhouse has been very properly counteracted.

Mr. Edwards had said to me aside, that Dr. Johnson should have been of a profession. I repeated the remark to Johnson that I might have his own thoughts on the subject. JOHNSON. "Sir, it *would* have been better that I had been of a profession. I ought to have been a lawyer."

BOSWELL. "I do not think, sir, it would have been better, for we should not have had the English Dictionary." JOHNSON. "But you would have had Reports." BOSWELL. "Ay; but there would not have been another who could have written the Dictionary. There have been many very good Judges. Suppose you had been Lord Chancellor; you would have delivered opinions with more extent of mind, and in a more ornamented manner than perhaps any Chancellor ever did, or ever will do. But, I believe, causes have been as judiciously decided as you could have done." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir. Property has been as well settled."

Johnson, however, had a noble ambition floating in his mind, and had, undoubtedly, often speculated on the possibility of his supereminent powers being rewarded in this great and liberal country by the highest honours of the state. Sir William Scott informs me, that upon the death of the late Lord Lichfield, who was Chancellor of the University of Oxford, he said to Johnson, "What a pity it is, sir, that you did not follow the profession of the law. You might have been Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, and attained to the dignity of the peerage; and now that the title of Lichfield, your native city, is extinct, you might have had it." Johnson, upon this, seemed much agitated; and, in an angry tone, exclaimed, "Why will you vex me by suggesting this when it is too late?"

But he did not repine at the prosperity of

others. The late Dr. Thomas Leland told Mr. Courtenay, that when Mr. Edmund Burke showed Johnson his fine house and lands near Beaconsfield, Johnson coolly said, '*Non equidem invideo; miror magis*'.

Yet no man had a higher notion of the dignity of literature than Johnson, or was more determined in maintaining the respect which he justly considered as due to it. Of this, besides the general tenour of his conduct in society, some characteristical instances may be mentioned.

He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that once when he dined in a numerous company of booksellers, where the room being small, the head of the table, at which he sat, was almost close to the fire, he persevered in suffering a great deal of inconvenience from the heat, rather than quit his place, and let one of them sit above him.

Goldsmith, in his diverting simplicity, complained one day, in a mixed company, of Lord

"I am not entirely without suspicion that Johnson may have felt a little momentary envy; for no man loved the good things of this life better than he did; and he could not but be conscious that he deserved a much larger share of them than he ever had. I attempted in a newspaper to comment on the above passage in the manner of Warburton, who must be allowed to have shown uncommon ingenuity, in giving to any author's text whatever meaning he chose it should carry. As this imitation may amuse my readers, I shall here introduce it:

"No saying of DR. JOHNSON's has been more misunderstood than his applying to MR. BURKE, when he first saw him at his fine place at Beaconsfield, *Non equidem invideo; miror magis*. These two celebrated men had been friends for many years before Mr. Burke entered on his parliamentary career. They were both writers, both members of THE LITERARY CLUB; when, therefore, Dr. Johnson saw Mr. Burke in a situation so much more splendid than that to which he himself had attained, he did not mean to express that he thought it a disproportionate prosperity; but while he, as a philosopher, asserted an exemption from envy, *non equidem invideo*, he went on in the words of the poet *miror magis*; thereby signifying, either that he was occupied in admiring what he was glad to see; or, perhaps, that considering the general lot of men of superior abilities, he wondered that Fortune, who is represented as blind, should, in this instance, have been so just."

Camden. "I met him (said he) at Lord Clare's house in the country, and he took no more notice of me than if I had been an ordinary man." The company having laughed heartily, Johnson stood forth in defence of his friend. "Nay, Gentlemen (said he), Dr. Goldsmith is in the right. A nobleman ought to have made up to such a man as Goldsmith; and I think it is much against Lord Camden that he neglected him."

Nor could he patiently endure to hear, that such respect as he thought due only to higher intellectual qualities should be bestowed on men of slighter, though perhaps more amusing talents. I told him, that one morning, when I went to breakfast with Garrick, who was very vain of his intimacy with Lord Camden, he accosted me thus:—"Pray now, did you—did you meet a little lawyer turning the corner, eh?"—"No, sir (said I). Pray what do you mean by the question?"—"Why (replied Garrick, with an affected indifference, yet as if standing on tiptoe), Lord Camden has this moment left me. We have had a long walk together." JOHNSON. "Well, sir, Garrick talked very properly. Lord Camden *was* a little lawyer to be associating so familiarly with a player."

Sir Joshua Reynolds observed, with great truth, that Johnson considered Garrick to be as it were his *property*. He would allow no man either to blame or to praise Garrick in his presence without contradicting him.

Having fallen into a very serious frame of mind, in which mutual expressions of kindness passed between us, such as would be thought too vain in me to repeat, I talked with regret of the sad inevitable certainty that one of us must survive the other. JOHNSON: "Yes, sir, that is an affecting consideration. I remember Swift, in one of his

letters to Pope, says, 'I intend to come over, that we may meet once more; and when we must part, it is what happens to all human beings.'"

BOSWELL. "The hope that we shall see our departed friends again must support the mind."

JOHNSON. "Why yes, sir?" BOSWELL. "There is a strange unwillingness to part with life, independent of serious fears as to futurity. A reverend friend of ours (naming him) tells me, that he feels an uneasiness at the thoughts of leaving his house, his study, his books." JOHNSON. "This is foolish in \*\*\*\*\*. A man need not be uneasy on these grounds; for, as he will retain his consciousness, he may say with the philosopher, *Omnia mea mecum porto*." BOSWELL. "True, sir: we may carry our books in our heads; but still there is something painful in the thought of leaving for ever what has given us pleasure. I remember, many years ago, when my imagination was warm, and I happened to be in a melancholy mood, it distressed me to think of going into a state of being in which Shakspeare's poetry did not exist. A lady whom I then much admired, a very amiable woman, flattered my fancy, and relieved me by saying, 'The first thing you will meet in the other world will be an elegant copy of Shakspeare's works presented to you.'" Dr. Johnson smiled benignantly at this, and did not appear to disapprove of the notion.

We went to St. Clement's church again in the afternoon, and then returned and drank tea and coffee in Mrs. Williams's room; Mrs. Desmoulins doing the honours of the tea table. I observed that he would not even look at a proof sheet of his "Life of Waller" on Good Friday.

Mr. Allen, the printer, brought a book on agriculture, which was printed, and was soon to be

\* [See on the same subject, vol. ii. 165. M.]

published. It was a very strange performance, the authour having mixed in it his own thoughts upon various topicks along with his remarks on ploughing, sowing, and other farming operations. He seemed to be an absurd profane fellow, and had introduced in his book many sneers at religion with equal ignorance and conceit. Dr. Johnson permitted me to read some passages aloud. One was, that he resolved to work on Sunday, and did work, but he owned he felt *some* weak compunction; and he had this very curious reflection:—"I was born in the wilds of Christianity, and the briars and thorns still hang about me." Dr. Johnson could not help laughing at this ridiculous image, yet was very angry at the fellow's impiety. "However (said he), the Reviewers will make him hang himself." He however observed, "that formerly there might have been a dispensation obtained for working on Sunday in the time of harvest." Indeed, in ritual observances, were all the ministers of religion what they should be, and what many of them are, such a power might be wisely and safely lodged with the Church.

On Saturday, April 14, I drank tea with him. He praised the late Mr. Duncombe<sup>3</sup>, of Canterbury, as a pleasing man. "He used to come to me; I did not seek much after *him*. Indeed I never sought much after any body." BOSWELL. "Lord Orrery, I suppose." JOHNSON. "No, sir; I never went to him but when he sent for me." BOSWELL. "Richardson?" JOHNSON. "Yes, sir. But I sought after George Psalmanazar the most. I used to go and sit with him at an alehouse in the city."

<sup>3</sup> [William Duncombe, Esq. He married the sister of John Hughes, the poet; was the authour of two tragedies, and other ingenious productions; and died Feb. 26, 1769, aged 79. M.]

I am happy to mention another instance which I discovered, of his *seeking after* a man of merit. Soon after the Honourable Daines Barrington had published his excellent "Observations on the Statutes<sup>4</sup>," Johnson waited on that worthy and learned gentleman; and, having told him his name, courteously said, "I have read your book, sir, with great pleasure, and wish to be better known to you." Thus began an acquaintance which was continued with mutual regard as long as Johnson lived.

Talking of a recent seditious delinquent, he said, "They should set him in the pillory, that he may be punished in a way that would disgrace him." I observed, that the pillory does not always disgrace. And I mentioned an instance of a gentleman who, I thought, was not dishonoured by it. JOHNSON. "Ay, but he was, sir. He could not mouth and strut as he used to do after having been there. People are not willing to ask a man to their tables who has stood in the pillory."

The gentleman who had dined with us at Dr. Percy's<sup>5</sup> came in. Johnson attacked the Americans with intemperate vehemence of abuse. I said something in their favour; and added, that I was always sorry when he talked on that subject. This, it seems, exasperated him; though he said nothing at the time. The cloud was charged with sulphureous vapour, which was afterwards to burst in thunder.—We talked of a gentleman who was running out his fortune in London; and I said, "We must get him out of it. All his friends must quarrel with him, and that will soon drive him away." JOHNSON. "Nay,

<sup>4</sup> [4to. 1766. The worthy authour died many years after Johnson, March 13, 1800, aged about 74. M.]

<sup>5</sup> See p. 278 of this volume.

sir, we'll send *you* to him. If your company does not drive a man out of his house, nothing will." This was a horrible shock, for which there was no visible cause. I afterwards asked him why he had said so harsh a thing. JOHNSON. "Because, sir, you made me angry about the Americans." BOSWELL. "But why did you not take your revenge directly?" JOHNSON (smiling). "Because, sir, I had nothing ready. A man cannot strike till he has his weapons." This was a candid and pleasant confession.

He showed me to-night his drawing room, very genteelly fitted up; and said, "Mrs. Thrale sneered when I talked of my having asked you and your lady to live at my house. I was obliged to tell her, that you would be in as respectable a situation in my house as in hers. Sir, the insolence of wealth will creep out." BOSWELL. "She has a little both of the insolence of wealth and the conceit of parts." JOHNSON. "The insolence of wealth is a wretched thing; but the conceit of parts has some foundation. To be sure, it should not be. But who is without it?" BOSWELL. "Yourself, sir." JOHNSON. "Why, I play not tricks: I lay no traps." BOSWELL. "No, sir. You are six feet high, and you only do not stoop."

We talked of the numbers of people that sometimes have composed the household of great families. I mentioned that there were a hundred in the family of the present Earl of Eglintoune's father. Dr. Johnson seeming to doubt it, I began to enumerate. "Let us see: my Lord and my Lady two." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, if you are to count by twos, you may be long enough." BOSWELL. "Well, but now I add two sons and seven daughters and a servant for each, that will make twenty; so we have the fifth part already." JOHN-



son. "Very true. You get at twenty pretty readily; but you will not so easily get further on. We grow to five feet pretty readily; but it is not so easy to grow to seven."

On Sunday, April 19, being Easter day, after the solemnities of the festival in St. Paul's Church, I visited him, but could not stay to dinner. I expressed a wish to have the arguments for Christianity always in readiness, that my religious faith might be as firm and clear as any proposition whatever, so that I need not be under the least uneasiness when it should be attacked. JOHNSON. "Sir, you cannot answer all objections. You have demonstration for a First Cause: you see he must be good as well as powerful, because there is nothing to make him otherwise, and goodness of itself is preferable. Yet you have against this, what is very certain, the unhappiness of human life. This, however, gives us reason to hope for a future state of compensation, that there may be a perfect system. But of that we were not sure till we had a positive revelation." I told him; that his "*Rasselas*" had often made me unhappy; for it represented the misery of human life so well, and so convincingly to a thinking mind, that if at any time the impression wore off, and I felt myself easy, I began to suspect some delusion.

On Monday, April 20, I found him at home in the morning. We talked of a gentleman who we apprehended was gradually involving his circumstances by bad management. JOHNSON. "Wasting a fortune is evaporation by a thousand imperceptible means. If it were a stream, they'd stop it. You must speak to him. It is really miserable. Were he a gamester, it could be said he had hopes of winning. Were he a bankrupt in trade, he might have grown rich; but he has neither spirit to spend, nor resolution to spare. He

does not spend fast enough to have pleasure from it. He has the crime of prodigality, and the wretchedness of parsimony. If a man is killed in a duel, he is killed as many a one has been killed; but it is a sad thing for a man to lie down and die: to bleed to death because he has not fortitude enough to sear the wound, or even to stitch it up." I cannot but pause a moment to admire the fecundity of fancy and choice of language which in this instance, and, indeed, on almost all occasions, he displayed. It was well observed by Dr. Percy, now Bishop of Dromore, "The conversation of Johnson is strong and clear, and may be compared to an antique statue; where every vein and muscle is distinct and bold. Ordinary conversation resembles an inferiour cast."

On Saturday, April 25, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, with the learned Dr. Musgrave<sup>6</sup>, Counsellor Leland of Ireland, son to the historian, Mrs. Cholmondeley, and some more ladies. "The Project," a new poem, was read to the company by Dr. Musgrave. JOHNSON. "Sir, it has no power. Were it not for the well known names with which it is filled, it would be nothing: the names carry the poet, not the poet the names." MUSGRAVE. "A temporary poem always entertains us." JOHNSON. "So does an account of the criminals hanged yesterday entertain us."

He proceeded;—"Demosthenes Taylor, as he was called (that is, the Editor of Demosthenes), was the most silent man, the merest statue of a man that I have ever seen. I once dined in company with him, and all he said during the whole time was no more than *Richard*. How a man

<sup>6</sup> [Samuel Musgrave, M.D. Editor of Euripides, and author of "Dissertations on the Grecian Mythology," &c. published in 1782, after his death, by Mr. Tyrwhitt. M.]

should say only Richard, it is not easy to imagine. But it was thus: Dr. Douglas was talking of Dr. Zachary Grey, and ascribing to him something that was written by Dr. Richard Grey. So, to correct him, Taylor said (imitating his affected sententious emphasis and nod) ‘*Richard.*’”

Mrs. Cholmondeley, in a high flow of spirits, exhibited some lively sallies of hyperbolic compliment to Johnson, with whom she had been long acquainted; and was very easy. He was quick in catching the *manner* of the moment, and answered her somewhat in the style of the hero of a romance, “Madam, you crown me with unfading laurels.”

I happened, I know not how, to say that a pamphlet meant a prose piece. JOHNSON. “No, sir. A few sheets of poetry unbound are a pamphlet’ as much as a few sheets of prose.” MUSGRAVE. “A pamphlet may be understood to mean a poetical piece in Westminster Hall, that is, in formal language; but in common language it is understood to mean prose.” JOHNSON (and here was one of the many instances of his knowing clearly and telling exactly how a thing is). “A pamphlet is understood in common language to mean prose, only from this, that there is so much more prose written than poetry; as when we say a *book*, prose is understood for the same reason, though a book may as well be in poetry as in prose. We understand what is most general, and we name what is less frequent.”

We talked of a lady’s verses on Ireland.

7 [Dr. Johnson is here perfectly correct, and is supported by the usage of preceding writers. So in *MUSARUM DELICIÆ*, a collection of poems, 8vo. 1656 (the writer is speaking of Suckling’s play entitled *AGLAURA*, printed in folio):

“This great voluminous *pamphlet* may be said  
To be like one that hath more hair than head.” M.]

MISS REYNOLDS. "Have you seen them, sir?"

JOHNSON. "No, madam, I have seen a translation from Horace, by one of her daughters. She showed it me."

MISS REYNOLDS. "And how was it, sir?"

JOHNSON. "Why, very well for a young Miss's verses;—that is to say, compared with excellence, nothing; but, very well for the person who wrote them. I am vexed at being shown verses in that manner."

MISS REYNOLDS. "But if they should be good, why not give them hearty praise?"

JOHNSON. "Why, madam, because I have not then got the better of my bad humour from having been shown them. You must consider, madam; beforehand they may be bad as well as good. Nobody has a right to put another under such a difficulty that he must either hurt the person by telling the truth, or hurt himself by telling what is not true."

BOSWELL. "A man often shows his writings to people of eminence, to obtain from them, either from their good nature, or from their not being able to tell the truth firmly, a commendation, of which he may afterwards avail himself."

JOHNSON. "Very true, sir. Therefore the man who is asked by an authour, what he thinks of his work, is put to the torture, and is not obliged to speak the truth; so that what he says is not considered as his opinion; yet he has said it, and cannot retract it; and this authour, when mankind are hunting him with a canister at his tail, can say, 'I would not have published had not Johnson, or Reynolds, or Musgrave, or some other good judge commended the work.' Yet I consider it as a very difficult question in conscience, whether one should advise a man not to publish a work if profit be his object; for the man may say, 'Had it not been for you, I should have had the money.' Now you cannot be sure; for you have only your own opi-

nion, and the publick may think very differently."

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. "You must upon such an occasion have two judgments; one as to the real value of the work, the other as to what may please the general taste at the time." JOHNSON.

"But you can be *sure* of neither; and therefore I should scruple much to give a suppressive vote.

Both Goldsmith's comedies were once refused; his first by Garrick, his second by Colman, who was prevailed on at last by much solicitation, nay, a kind of force, to bring it on. His 'Vicar of Wakefield' I myself did not think would have

had much success. It was written, and sold to a bookseller before his 'Traveller;' but published

after; so little expectation had the bookseller from it. Had it been sold after the 'Traveller,'

he might have had twice as much money for it, though sixty guineas was no mean price. The

bookseller had the advantage of Goldsmith's reputation from 'The Traveller' in the sale, though

Goldsmith had it not in selling the copy." SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. "The Beggar's Opera affords

a proof how strangely people will differ in opinion about a literary performance. Burke thinks it

has no merit." JOHNSON. "It was refused by one of the houses; but I should have thought it

would succeed, not from any great excellence in the writing, but from the novelty, and the general

spirit and gaiety of the piece, which keeps the audience always attentive, and dismisses them in

good humour."

We went to the drawingroom, where was a considerable increase of company. Several of us

got round Dr. Johnson, and complained that he would not give us an exact catalogue of his works,

that there might be a complete edition. He smiled, and evaded our entreaties. That he intended to do it I have no doubt, because I have

heard him say so; and I have in my possession an imperfect list, fairly written out, which he entitles *Historia Studiorum*. I once got from one of his friends a list which there was pretty good reason to suppose was accurate, for it was written down in his presence by this friend, who enumerated each article aloud, and had some of them mentioned to him by Mr. Levett, in concert with whom it was made out; and Johnson, who heard all this, did not contradict it. But when I showed a copy of this list to him, and mentioned the evidence for its exactness, he laughed and said, "I was willing to let them go on as they pleased, and never interfered." Upon which I read it to him, article by article, and got him positively to own or refuse; and then, having obtained certainty so far, I got some other articles confirmed by him directly, and afterwards, from time to time, made additions under his sanction.

His friend, Edward Cave, having been mentioned, he told us, "Cave used to sell ten thousand of 'The Gentleman's Magazine;' yet such was then his minute attention and anxiety that the sale should not suffer the smallest decrease, that he would name a particular person who he heard had talked of leaving off the Magazine, and would say, 'Let us have something good next month.'"

It was observed that avarice was inherent in some dispositions. JOHNSON. "No man was born a miser, because no man was born to possession. Every man is born *cupidus*—desirous of getting; but not *avarus*,—desirous of keeping." BOSWELL. "I have heard old Mr. Sheridan maintain, with much ingenuity, that a complete miser is a happy man; a miser who gives himself wholly to the one passion of saving." JOHNSON. "That is flying in the face of all the world, who have called an avar-

ricious man a miser because he is miserable. No, sir; a man who both spends and saves money is the happiest man, because he has both enjoyments."

The conversation having turned on *Bons Mots*, he quoted, from one of the *Ana*, an exquisite instance of flattery in a maid of honour in France, who being asked by the Queen what o'clock it was, answered, "What your majesty pleases." He admitted that Mr. Burke's classical pun upon Mr. Wilkes's being carried on the shoulders of the mob,

on a horse, "*numerusque fertur  
legem solutus,*"

was admirable; and, though he was strangely unwilling to allow to that extraordinary man the talent of wit, he also laughed with approbation at another of his playful conceits; which was, that "Horace has in one line given a description of a good desirable manour:

*'Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines;'*

that is to say, a *modus* as to the tithes, and certain *fines*."

He observed, "A man cannot with propriety

<sup>8</sup> See this question fully investigated in the Notes upon my "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides," edit. 3, p. 21, *et seq.* And here, as a lawyer mindful of the maxim *Suum cuique tribuito*, I cannot forbear to mention that the additional Note beginning with "I find since the former edition," is not mine, but was obligingly furnished by Mr. Malone, who was so kind as to superintend the press while I was in Scotland, and the first part of the second edition was printing. He would not allow me to ascribe it to its proper author; but, as it is exquisitely acute and elegant, I take this opportunity, without his knowledge, to do him justice.

<sup>9</sup> [This, as both Mr. Bindley and Dr. Kearney have observed to me, is the motto to "An Inquiry into Customary Estates and Tenant's Rights, &c.—with some Considerations for restraining excessive *Fines*." By Everard Fleetwood, Esq. 8vo. 1731. But it is, probably, a mere coincidence. Mr. Burke perhaps never saw that pamphlet. M.]

speak of himself except he relates simple facts; as, 'I was at Richmond:' or what depends on mensuration; as, 'I am six feet high.' He is sure he has been at Richmond; he is sure he is six feet high: but he cannot be sure he is wise, or that he has any other excellence. Then, all censure of a man's self is oblique praise. It is in order to show how much he can spare. It has all the invidiousness of self-praise, and all the reproach of falsehood. BOSWELL. "Sometimes it may proceed from a man's strong consciousness of his faults being observed. He knows that others would throw him down, and therefore he had better lie down softly of his own accord."

On Tuesday, April 28, he was engaged to dine at General Paoli's, where, as I have already observed, I was still entertained in elegant hospitality, and with all the ease and comfort of a home. I called on him, and accompanied him in a hackney coach. We stopped first at the bottom of Hedge Lane, into which he went to leave a letter, with "good news for a poor man in distress," as he told me. I did not question him particularly as to this. He himself often resembled Lady Bolingbroke's lively description of Pope: that "he was *un politique aux choux et aux raves*." He would say, "I dine to-day in Grosvenor Square;" this might be with a Duke; or, perhaps, "I dine to-day at the other end of the town:" or, "A gentleman of great eminence called on me yesterday."—He loved thus to keep things floating in conjecture: *Omne ignotum pro magnifico est*. I believe I ventured to dissipate the cloud, to unveil the mystery more freely and frequently than any of his friends. We stopped again at Wirgman's, the well known *toy-shop*, in St. James's Street, at the corner of St. James's Place, to which he had been directed, but not



clearly, for he searched about some time, and could not find it at first; and said, "To direct one only to a corner shop is *toying* with one." I suppose he meant this as a play upon the word *toy*; it was the first time that I knew him stoop to such sport. After he had been some time in the shop, he sent for me to come out of the coach, and help him to choose a pair of silver buckles, as those he had were too small. Probably this alteration in dress had been suggested by Mrs. Thrale, by associating with whom, his external appearance was much improved. He got better clothes; and the dark colour, from which he never deviated, was enlivened by metal buttons. His wigs, too, were much better; and, during their travels in France, he was furnished with a Paris made wig, of handsome construction. This choosing of silver buckles was a negotiation: "Sir (said he), I will not have the ridiculous large ones now in fashion; and I will give no more than a guinea for a pair." Such were the *principles* of the business: and, after some examination, he was fitted. As we drove along, I found him in a talking humour, of which I availed myself. BOSWELL. "I was this morning in Ridley's shop, sir; and was told that the collection called '*Johnsoniana*' has sold very much." JOHNSON. "Yet the '*Journey to the Hebrides*' has not had a great sale<sup>1</sup>." BOSWELL. "That is strange." JOHNSON. "Yes sir; for in that book I have told the world a great deal that they did not know before."

<sup>1</sup> Here he either was mistaken, or had a different notion of an extensive sale from what is generally entertained: for the fact is, that four thousand copies of that excellent work were sold very quickly. A new edition has been printed since his death, besides that in the collection of his works.

[Another edition has been printed since Mr. Boswell wrote the above, besides repeated editions in the general collection of his works during the last ten years. M.]

BOSWELL. "I drank chocolate, sir, this morning with Mr. Eld; and, to my no small surprise, found him to be a *Staffordshire Whig*, a being which I did not believe had existed." JOHNSON. "Sir, there are rascals in all countries." BOSWELL. "Eld said, a Tory was a creature generated between a nonjuring parson and one's grandmother." JOHNSON. "And I have always said, the first Whig was the Devil." BOSWELL. "He certainly was, sir. The Devil was impatient of subordination; he was the first who resisted power:

'Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.'

At General Paoli's were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Langton, Marchese Gherardi of Lombardy, and Mr. John Spottiswoode the younger, of Spottiswoode<sup>2</sup>, the solicitor. At this time fears of an invasion were circulated; to obviate which Mr. Spottiswoode observed, that Mr. Fraser the engineer, who had lately come from Dunkirk, said that the French had the same fears of us. JOHNSON. "It is thus that mutual cowardice keeps us in peace. Were one half of mankind brave, and one half cowards, the brave would be always beating the cowards. Were all brave, they would lead a very uneasy life; all would be continually fighting: but being all cowards, we go on very well."

We talked of drinking wine. JOHNSON. "I require wine only when I am alone. I have then often wished for it; and often taken it." SPOTTISWOODE. "What, by way of a companion, sir?"

<sup>2</sup> In the phraseology of Scotland I should have said, "Mr. John Spottiswoode the younger, *of that ilk*." Johnson knew that sense of the word very well, and has thus explained it in his Dictionary, *voce ILK*—"It also signifies 'the same;' as, *Blackintosh of that ilk*, denotes a gentleman whose surname and the title of his estate are the same."



the time!—If they care this minute, they forget it the next. And as for the good worthy man; how do you know he is good and worthy? No good and worthy man will insist upon another man's drinking wine. As to the wine twenty years in the cellar,—of ten men, three say this merely because they must say something; three are telling a lie, when they say they have had the wine twenty years;—three would rather save the wine;—one, perhaps, cares. I allow it is something to please one's company; and people are always pleased with those who partake pleasure with them. But after a man has brought himself to relinquish the great personal pleasure which arises from drinking wine, any other consideration is a trifle. To please others by drinking wine is something only, if there be nothing against it. I should, however, be sorry to offend worthy men:

'Curst be the verse, how well so e'er it flow,  
That tends to make one worthy man my foe.' "

BOSWELL. "Curst be the *spring*, the *water*."—

JOHNSON. "But let us consider what a sad thing it would be, if we were obliged to drink or do any thing else that may happen to be agreeable to the company where we are." LANGTON. "By the same rule you must join with a gang of cut-purses." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir: but yet we must do justice to wine; we must allow it the power it possesses. To make a man pleased with himself, let me tell you, is doing a very great thing:

'*Si patriæ volumus, si Nobis vivere cari.*' "

I was at this time myself a water-drinker, upon trial, by Johnson's recommendation. JOHNSON: "Boswell is a bolder combatant than Sir Joshua: he argues for wine without the help of wine; but Sir Joshua with it." SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.



less hurt to be sober than it would do me to get drunk." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir; and from what I have heard of him, one would not wish to sacrifice himself to such a man. If he must always have somebody to drink with him, he should buy a slave, and then he would be sure to have it. They who submit to drink as another pleases make themselves his slaves." BOSWELL. "But, sir, you will surely make allowance for the duty of hospitality. A gentleman, who loves drinking, comes to visit me." JOHNSON. "Sir, a man knows whom he visits; he comes to the table of a sober man." BOSWELL. "But, sir, you and I should not have been so well received in the Highlands and Hebrides, if I had not drunk with our worthy friends. Had I drunk water only as you did, they would not have been so cordial." JOHNSON. "Sir William Temple mentions, that in his travels through the Netherlands he had two or three gentlemen with him; and when a bumper was necessary, he put it on *them*. Were I to travel again through the islands, I would have Sir Joshua with me to take the bumpers." BOSWELL. "But, sir, let me put a case. Suppose Sir Joshua should take a jaunt into Scotland; he does me the honour to pay me a visit at my house in the country; I am overjoyed at seeing him; we are quite by ourselves; shall I unsociably and churlishly let him sit drinking by himself? No, no, my dear Sir Joshua, you shall not be treated so; I *will* take a bottle with you."

The celebrated Mrs. Rudd being mentioned. JOHNSON. "Fifteen years ago I should have gone to see her." SPOTTISWOODE. "Because she was fifteen years younger?" JOHNSON. "No, sir; but now they have a trick of putting every thing into the newspapers."

He begged of General Paoli to repeat one of

the introductory stanzas of the first book of Tasso's "Jerusalem," which he did, and then Johnson found fault with the simile of sweetening the edges of a cup for a child, being transferred from Lucretius into an epick poem. The General said he did not imagine Homer's poetry was so ancient as is supposed, because he ascribes to a Greek colony circumstances of refinement not found in Greece itself at a later period, when Thucydides wrote. JOHNSON. "I recollect but one passage quoted by Thucydides from Homer, which is not to be found in our copies of Homer's works; I am for the antiquity of Homer, and think that a Grecian colony by being nearer Persia might be more refined than the mother country."

On Wednesday, April 29, I dined with him at Mr. Allan Ramsay's, where were Lord Binning, Dr. Robertson the historian, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the Honourable Mrs. Boscawen, widow of the Admiral, and mother of the present Viscount Falmouth; of whom, if it be not presumptuous in me to praise her, I would say, that her manners are the most agreeable, and her conversation the best of any lady with whom I ever had the happiness to be acquainted. Before Johnson came we talked a good deal of him; Ramsay said he had always found him a very polite man, and that he treated him with great respect, which he did very sincerely. I said, I worshiped him. ROBERTSON. "But some of you spoil him; you should not worship him; you should worship no man." BOSWELL. "I cannot help worshiping him, he is so much superiour to other men." ROBERTSON. "In criticism, and in wit and conversation, he is no doubt very excellent; but in other respects he is not above other men; he will believe any thing, and will strenu-

ously defend the most minute circumstance connected with the Church of England." BOSWELL.

"Believe me, Doctor, you are much mistaken as to this; for when you talk with him calmly in private, he is very liberal in his way of thinking."

ROBERTSON. "He and I have been always very gracious; the first time I met him was one evening at Strahan's, when he had just had an unlucky altercation with Adam Smith, to whom he had been so rough that Strahan, after Smith was gone, had remonstrated with him, and told him that I was coming soon, and that he was uneasy to think that he might behave in the same manner to me. 'No, no, sir (said Johnson), I warrant you Robertson and I shall do very well.' Accordingly he was gentle and good humoured and courteous with me the whole evening; and he has been so upon every occasion that we have met since. I have often said (laughing), that I have been in a great measure indebted to Smith for my good reception." BOSWELL. "His power of reasoning is very strong, and he has a peculiar art of drawing characters, which is as rare as good portrait painting."

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. "He is undoubtedly admirable in this; but, in order to mark the characters which he draws, he overcharges them, and gives people more than they really have, whether of good or bad."

No sooner did he, of whom we had been thus talking so easy, arrive than we were all as quiet as a school upon the entrance of the head-master; and were very soon sat down to a table covered with such variety of good things as contributed not a little to dispose him to be pleased.

RAMSAY. "I am old enough to have been a contemporary of Pope. His poetry was highly admired in his lifetime, more a great deal than after his death." JOHNSON. "Sir, it has not been less admired since his death; no authors ever



had so much fame in their own lifetime as Pope and Voltaire; and Pope's poetry has been as much admired since his death as during his life; it has only not been as much talked of, but that is owing to its being now more distant, and people having other writings to talk of. Virgil is less talked of than Pope, and Homer is less talked of than Virgil; but they are not less admired. We must read what the world reads at the moment. It has been maintained that this superfetation, this teeming of the press in modern times, is prejudicial to good literature, because it obliges us to read so much of what is of inferior value, in order to be in the fashion; so that better works are neglected for want of time, because a man will have more gratification of his vanity in conversation, from having read modern books than from having read the best works of antiquity. But it must be considered that we have now more knowledge generally diffused; all our ladies read now, which is a great extension.—Modern writers are the moons of literature; they shine with reflected light, with light borrowed from the ancients. Greece appears to me to be the fountain of knowledge; Rome of elegance.” RAMSAY. “I suppose Homer's ‘Iliad’ to be a collection of pieces which had been written before his time. I should like to see a translation of it in poetical prose, like the book of Ruth or Job.” ROBERTSON. “Would you, Dr. Johnson, who are master of the English language, but try your hand upon a part of it.” JOHNSON. “Sir you could not read it without the pleasure of verse<sup>4</sup>.”

We talked of antiquarian researches. JOHNSON.

<sup>4</sup> This experiment, which Madame Dacier made in vain, has since been tried in our own language, by the editor of “Ossian,” and we must either think very meanly of his abilities, or allow that Dr. Johnson was in the right. And Mr. Cowper, a man of real genius, has miserably failed in his blank verse translation.

"All that is really *known* of the ancient state of Britain is contained in a few pages. We *can* know no more than what the old writers have told us; yet what large books have we upon it, the whole of which, excepting such parts as are taken from those old writers, is all a dream, such as Whitaker's 'Manchester.' I have heard Henry's 'History of Britain' well spoken of: I am told it is carried on in separate divisions, as the civil, the military, the religious history; I wish much to have one branch well done, and that is the history of manners, of common life."

ROBERTSON. "Henry should have applied his attention to that alone, which is enough for any man; and he might have found a great deal scattered in various books, had he read solely with that view. Henry erred in not selling his first volume at a moderate price to the booksellers, that they might have pushed him on till he had got reputation. I sold my 'History of Scotland' at a moderate price, as a work by which the booksellers might either gain or not; and Cadell has told me that Millar and he have got six thousand pounds by it. I afterwards received a much higher price for my writings. An authour should sell his first work for what the booksellers will give, till it shall appear whether he is an authour of merit, or, which is the same thing as to purchase-money, an authour who pleases the publick."

Dr. Robertson expatiated on the character of a certain nobleman; that he was one of the strongest minded men that ever lived; that he would sit in company quite sluggish, while there was nothing to call forth his intellectual vigour; but the moment that any important subject was started, for instance, how this country is to be defended against a French invasion, he would

rouse himself, and show his extraordinary talents with the most powerful ability and animation. JOHNSON. "Yet this man cut his own throat. The true strong and sound mind is the mind that can embrace equally great things and small.—Now I am told the King of Prussia will say to a servant, 'Bring me a bottle of such a wine, which came in such a year; it lies in such a corner of the cellars.' I would have a man great in great things, and elegant in little things." He said to me afterwards, when we were by ourselves, "Robertson was in a mighty romantick humour, he talked of one whom he did not know; but I *downed* him with the King of Prussia."—"Yes, sir (said I), you threw a *bottle* at his head."

An ingenious gentleman was mentioned, concerning whom both Robertson and Ramsay agreed that he had a constant firmness of mind; for after a laborious day, and amidst a multiplicity of cares and anxieties, he would sit down with his sisters and be quite cheerful and good humoured. Such a disposition, it was observed, was a happy gift of nature. JOHNSON. "I do not think so; a man has from nature a certain portion of mind; the use he makes of it depends upon his own free will. That a man has always the same firmness of mind I do not say; because every man feels his mind less firm at one time than another; but I think, a man's being in a good or bad humour depends upon his will."—I, however, could not help thinking, that a man's humour is often uncontrolable by his will.

Johnson harangued against drinking wine. "A man (said he) may choose whether he will have abstemiousness and knowledge, or claret and ignorance." Dr. Robertson (who is very companionable) was beginning to dissent as to the prescription of claret. JOHNSON (with a placid smile).

“Nay, sir, you shall not differ with me; as I have said that the man is most perfect who takes in the most things, I am for knowledge and claret.” ROBERTSON (holding a glass of generous claret in his hand). “Sir, I can only drink your health.” JOHNSON. “Sir, I should be sorry if *you* should be ever in such a state as to be able to do nothing more.” ROBERTSON. “Dr. Johnson, allow me to say, that in one respect I have the advantage of you; when you were in Scotland you would not come to hear any of our preachers, whereas, when I am here, I attend your publick worship without scruple, and, indeed, with great satisfaction.” JOHNSON. “Why, sir, that is not so extraordinary: the King of Siam sent ambassadours to Louis the Fourteenth; but Louis the Fourteenth sent none to the King of Siam<sup>5</sup>.”

Here my friend for once discovered a want of knowledge or forgetfulness; for Louis the Fourteenth did send an embassy to the King of Siam<sup>6</sup>, and the Abbé Choisi, who was employed in it, published an account of it in two volumes.

Next day, Thursday, April 30, I found him at home by himself. JOHNSON. “Well, sir, Ramsay gave us a splendid dinner. I love Ramsay. You will not find a man in whose conversation there is more instruction, more information, and more elegance than in Ramsay’s.” BOSWELL. “What I admire in Ramsay is his continuing to be so young.” JOHNSON. “Why, yes, sir, it is to be admired. I value myself upon this, that there is nothing of the old man in my conversation. I am now sixty-eight, and I have no more of it than

<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Piozzi confidently mentions this as having passed in Scotland. “Anecdotes,” p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> [The Abbé de Choisi was sent by Louis XIV. on an embassy to the King of Siam in 1683, with a view, it has been said, to convert the King of that country to Christianity. M.]



On Saturday, May 2, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where there was a very large company, and a great deal of conversation; but owing to some circumstance which I cannot now recollect, I have no record of any part of it, except that there were several people there by no means of the Johnsonian school; so that less attention was paid to him than usual, which put him out of humour; and upon some imaginary offence from me, he attacked me with such rudeness that I was vexed and angry, because it gave those persons an opportunity of enlarging upon his supposed ferocity, and ill treatment of his best friends. I was so much hurt, and had my pride so much roused, that I kept away from him for a week; and, perhaps, might have kept away much longer, nay, gone to Scotland without seeing him again, had not we fortunately met and been reconciled. To such unhappy chances are human friendships liable.

On Friday, May 8, I dined with him at Mr. Langton's. I was reserved and silent, which I suppose he perceived, and might recollect the cause. After dinner, when Mr. Langton was called out of the room, and we were by ourselves, he drew his chair near to mine, and said, in a tone of conciliating courtesy, "Well, how have you done?" BOSWELL. "Sir, you have made me very uneasy by your behaviour to me when we were last at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. You know, my dear sir, no man has a greater respect and affection for you, or would sooner go to the end of the world to serve you. Now to treat me so—" He insisted that I had interrupted him, which I assured him was not the case; and proceeded—"But why treat me so before people who neither love you nor me?" JOHNSON. "Well, I am sorry for it. I'll make it up to you twenty different

ways, as you please." BOSWELL. "I said to-day to Sir Joshua, when he observed that you *tossed* me sometimes—I don't care how often, or how high he tosses me when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground: but I do not like falling on stones, which is the case when enemies are present.—I think this is a pretty good image, sir." JOHNSON. "Sir, it is one of the happiest I have ever heard."

The truth is, there was no venom in the wounds which he inflicted at any time, unless they were irritated by some malignant infusion by other hands. We were instantly as cordial again as ever, and joined in hearty laugh at some ludicrous but innocent peculiarities of one of our friends. BOSWELL. "Do you think, sir, it is always culpable to laugh at a man to his face?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, that depends upon the man and the thing. If it is a slight man and a slight thing, you may; for you take nothing valuable from him."

He said, "I read yesterday Dr. Blair's sermon on Devotion, from the text '*Cornelius, a devout man.*' His doctrine is the best limited, the best expressed: there is the most warmth without fanaticism, the most rational transport. There is one part of it which I disapprove, and I'd have him correct it; which is, that 'he who does not feel joy in religion is far from the kingdom of Heaven!' there are many good men whose fear of God predominates over their love. It may discourage. It was rashly said. A noble sermon it is indeed. I wish Blair would come over to the Church of England."

When Mr. Langton returned to us, the "flow of talk" went on. An eminent authour being mentioned;—JOHNSON. "He is not a pleasant man. His conversation is neither instructive nor

brilliant. He does not talk as if impelled by any fulness of knowledge or vivacity of imagination. His conversation is like that of any other sensible man. He talks with no wish either to inform or to hear, but only because he thinks it does not become ——— to sit in a company and say nothing."

Mr. Langton having repeated the anecdote of Addison having distinguished between his powers in conversation and his writing, by saying, "I have only nine-pence in my pocket; but I can draw for a thousand pounds."—JOHNSON. "He had that retort ready, sir; he had prepared it beforehand." LANGTON (turning to me). "A fine surmise. Set a thief to catch a thief."

Johnson called the East Indians barbarians.

BOSWELL. "You will except the Chinese, sir?"

JOHNSON. "No, sir." BOSWELL. "Have they not arts?" JOHNSON. "They have pottery."

BOSWELL. "What do you say to the written characters of their language?" JOHNSON. "Sir, they have not an alphabet. They have not been able to form what all other nations have formed."

BOSWELL. "There is more learning in their language than in any other, from the immense number of their characters."—JOHNSON. "It is only more difficult from its rudeness; as there is more labour in hewing down a tree with a stone than with an axe."

He said, "I have been reading Lord Kames's 'Sketches of the History of Man.' In treating of severity of punishment, he mentions that of Madame Lapouchin, in Russia, but he does not give it fairly; for I have looked at *Chappe D'Au-terocke*, from whom he has taken it. He stops where it is said that the spectators thought her innocent, and leaves out what follows; that she nevertheless was guilty. Now this is being as



culpable as one can conceive, to misrepresent fact in a book, and for what motive? It is like one of those lies which people tell, one cannot see why. The woman's life was spared; and no punishment was too great for the favourite of an Empress, who had conspired to dethrone her mistress." BOSWELL. "He was only giving a picture of the lady in her sufferings." JOHNSON. "Nay, don't endeavour to palliate this. Guilt is a principal feature in the picture. Kames is puzzled with a question that puzzled me when I was a very young man. Why is it that the interest of money is lower, when money is plentiful; for five pounds has the same proportion of value to a hundred pounds when money is plentiful as when it is scarce? A lady explained it to me. 'It is (said she) because when money is plentiful there are so many more who have money to lend, that they bid down one another. Many have then a hundred pounds; and one says, —Take mine rather than another's, and you shall have it at four *per cent*.'" BOSWELL. "Does Lord Kames decide the question?" JOHNSON. "I think he leaves it as he found it." BOSWELL. "This must have been an extraordinary lady who instructed you, sir. May I ask who she was?" JOHNSON. "Molly Aston", sir, the sister of those ladies with whom you dined at Lichfield.—I.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson had an extraordinary admiration of this lady, notwithstanding she was a violent Whig. In answer to her high flown speeches for *Liberty*, he addressed to her the following Epigram, of which I presume to offer a translation:

"Liber ut esse velim, suasisti, pulchra Maria;  
Ut maneam liber, pulchra Maria, vale."

Adieu, Maria! since you'd have me free;  
For, who beholds thy charms a slave must be.

A correspondent of "The Gentleman's Magazine," who subscribes himself SCIOLUS, to whom I am indebted for several excellent remarks, observes, "The turn of Dr. Johnson's lines to Miss Aston, whose Whig principles he had been combating, appears to me to be

shall be at home to-morrow." BOSWELL. "Then let us dine by ourselves at the Mitre, to keep up the old custom, 'the custom of the manor,' custom of the Mitre." JOHNSON. "Sir, so it shall be."

On Saturday, May 9, we fulfilled our purpose of dining by ourselves at the Mitre, according to old custom. There was, on these occasions, a little circumstance of kind attention to Mrs. Williams, which must not be omitted. Before coming out, and leaving her to dine alone, he gave her her choice of a chicken, a sweetbread, or any other little nice thing, which was carefully sent to her from the tavern, ready dressed.

Our conversation to-day, I know not how, turned, I think for the only time at any length, during our long acquaintance, upon the sensual intercourse between the sexes, the delight of which he ascribed chiefly to imagination. "Were it not for imagination, sir (said he), a man would be as happy in the arms of a Chambermaid as of a Duchess. But such is the adventitious charm of fancy, that we find men who have violated the best principles of society, and ruined their fame and their fortune, that they might possess a woman of rank." It would not be proper to record the particulars of such a conversation in moments of unreserved frankness, when nobody was present on whom it could have any hurtful effect. That subject, when philosophically treated, may surely employ the mind in a curious discussion,

taken from an ingenious epigram in the '*Menagiana*,' [Vol. iii. p. 376, edit. 1716.] on a young lady who appeared at a masquerade, *habillée en Jéuite*, during the fierce contentions of the followers of Molinos and Jansenius concerning free will:

'On s'étonne ici que Calisto  
Ait pris l'habit de Moliniste.  
Puisque cette jeune beauté  
Ote à chacun sa liberté,  
N'est-ce pas une Janseniste?'

and as innocently, as anatomy; provided that those who do treat it keep clear of inflammatory incentives.

“From grave to gay, from lively to severe,”—we were soon engaged in very different speculation; humbly and reverently considering and wondering at the universal mystery of all things; as our imperfect faculties can now judge of them. “There are (said he) innumerable questions to which the inquisitive mind can in this state receive no answer: Why do you and I exist? Why was this world created? Since it was to be created, why was it not created sooner?”

On Sunday, May 10, I supped with him at Mr. Hoole’s, with Sir Joshua Reynolds. I have neglected the memorial of this evening, so as to remember no more of it than two particulars: one that he strenuously opposed an argument by Sir Joshua; that virtue was preferable to vice, considering this life only; and that a man would be virtuous, were it only to preserve his character: and that he expressed much wonder at the curious formation of the bat, a mouse with wings; saying, that it was almost as strange a thing in physiology as if the fabulous dragon could be seen.

On Tuesday, May 12, I waited on the Earl of Marchmont, to know if his Lordship would favour Dr. Johnson with information concerning Pope, whose Life he was about to write. Johnson had not flattered himself with the hopes of receiving any civility from this nobleman; for he said to me, when I mentioned Lord Marchmont as one who could tell him a great deal about Pope,—“Sir, he will tell *me* nothing.” I had the honour of being known to his Lordship, and applied to him of myself, without being commissioned by Johnson. His Lordship behaved in the most polite and obliging manner, promised to tell all he

recollected about Pope, and was so very courteous as to say, "Tell Dr. Johnson, I have a great respect for him, and am ready to show it in any way I can. I am to be in the city to-morrow, and will call at his house as I return." His Lordship however asked, "Will he write the Lives of the Poets impartially?" He was the first that brought Whig and Tory into a Dictionary. And what do you think of his definition of *Excise*? Do you know the history of his aversion to the word *transpire*?" Then taking down the folio Dictionary, he showed it with this censure on its secondary sense: "'To escape from secrecy to notice; a sense lately innovated from France; without necessity.' The truth was, Lord Bolingbroke, who left the Jacobites, first used it; therefore it was to be condemned. He should have shown what word would do for it, if it was unnecessary." I afterwards put the question to Johnson: "Why, sir (said he), *get abroad*." BOSWELL. "That, sir, is using two words." JOHNSON. "Sir, there is no end of this. You may as well insist to have a word for old age." BOSWELL. "Well, sir, *Senectus*." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, to insist always that there should be one word to express a thing in English, because there is one in another language, is to change the language."

I availed myself of this opportunity to hear from his Lordship many particulars both of Pope and Lord Bolingbroke, which I have in writing.

I proposed to Lord Marchmont, that he should revise Johnson's Life of Pope: "So (said his Lordship) you would put me in a dangerous situation. You know he knocked down Osborne, the bookseller."

Elated with the success of my spontaneous exertion to procure material and respectable aid to Johnson for his very favourite work, "the Lives

of the Poets," I hastened down to Mr. Thrale's at Streatham; where he now was, that I might insure his being at home next day; and after dinner, when I thought he would receive the good news in the best humour, I announced it eagerly: "I have been at work for you to-day, sir. I have been with Lord Marchmont. He bade me tell you, he has a great respect for you, and will call on you to-morrow; at one o'clock, and communicate all he knows about Pope."—Here I paused, in full expectation that he would be pleased with this intelligence, would praise my active merit, and would be alert to embrace such an offer from a nobleman. But whether I had shown an over exultation, which provoked his spleen; or whether he was seized with a suspicion that I had obtruded him on Lord Marchmont, and humbled him too much; or whether there was any thing more than an unlucky fit of ill humour, I know not; but, to my surprise, the result was,—JOHNSON. "I shall not be in town to-morrow. I don't care to know about Pope." MRS. THRALE (surprised as I was, and a little angry). "I suppose, sir, Mr. Boswell thought, that as you are to write Pope's Life, you would wish to know about him." JOHNSON. "Wish! why yes. If it rained knowledge, I'd hold out my hand; but I would not give myself the trouble to go in quest of it." There was no arguing with him at the moment. Some time afterwards he said, "Lord Marchmont will call on me, and then I shall call on Lord Marchmont." Mrs. Thrale was uneasy at his unaccountable caprice; and told me, that if I did not take care to bring about a meeting between Lord Marchmont and him, it would never take place, which would be a great pity. I sent a card to his Lordship, to be left at Johnson's house, acquainting him that

Dr. Johnson could not be in town next day; but would do himself the honour of waiting on him at another time.—I give this account fairly, as a specimen of that unhappy temper with which this great and good man had occasionally to struggle, from something morbid in his constitution. Let the most censorious of my readers suppose himself to have a violent fit of the toothach, or to have received a severe stroke on the shin bone, and when in such a state to be asked a question; and if he has any candour, he will not be surprised at the answers which Johnson sometimes gave in moments of irritation, which, let me assure them, is exquisitely painful. But it must not be erroneously supposed that he was, in the smallest degree, careless concerning any work which he undertook, or that he was generally thus peevish. It will be seen that in the following year he had a very agreeable interview with Lord Marchmont, at his Lordship's house; and this very afternoon he soon forgot any fretfulness, and fell into conversation as usual.

I mentioned a reflection having been thrown out against four Peers for having presumed to rise in opposition to the opinion of the twelve Judges, in a cause in the House of Lords, as if that were indecent. JOHNSON. "Sir, there is no ground for censure. The Peers are Judges themselves: and supposing them really to be of a different opinion, they might from duty be in opposition to the Judges, who were there only to be consulted."

In this observation I fully concurred with him; for unquestionably all the Peers are vested with the highest judicial powers; and when they are confident that they understand a cause, are not obliged, nay ought not to acquiesce in the opinion of the ordinary Law Judges, or even in that

of those who from their studies and experience are called the Law Lords. I consider the Peers in general as I do a Jury, who ought to listen with respectful attention to the sages of the law; but, if after hearing them, they have a firm opinion of their own, are bound, as honest men, to decide accordingly. Nor is it so difficult for them to understand even law questions, as is generally thought; provided they will bestow sufficient attention upon them. This observation was made by my honoured relation to the late Lord Cathcart, who had spent his life in camps and courts; yet assured me, that he could form a clear opinion upon most of the causes that came before the House of Lords, "as they were so well enucleated in the Cases."

Mrs. Thrale told us, that a curious clergyman of our acquaintance had discovered a licentious stanza, which Pope had originally in his "Universal Prayer," before the stanza,

"What conscience dictates to be done,  
Or warns us not to do," &c.

It was this:

"Can sins of moment claim the rod  
Of everlasting fires?  
And that offend great Nature's God  
Which Nature's self inspires!"

and that Dr. Johnson observed, "it had been borrowed from *Guarini*." There are, indeed, in *Pastor Fido*, many such flimsy superficial reasonings, as that in the last two lines of this stanza.

BOSWELL. "In that stanza of Pope's, 'rod of fires' is certainly a bad metaphor." MRS. THRALE. "And 'sins of moment' is a faulty expression; for its true import is *momentous*, which cannot be intended." JOHNSON. "It must have been written

‘of moments.’ Of *moment*, is *momentous*; of *moments*, *momentary*. I warrant you, however, Pope wrote this stanza, and some friend struck it out. Boileau wrote some such thing, and Arnaud struck it out, saying, ‘*Vous gagnerez deux ou trois impiés, et perdrez je ne sais combien des honnettes gens.*’ These fellows want to say a daring thing, and don’t know how to go about it. Mere poets know no more of fundamental principles than—” Here he was interrupted somehow. Mrs. Thrale mentioned Dryden. JOHNSON. “He puzzled himself about predestination.—How foolish was it in Pope to give all his friendship to Lords, who thought they honoured him by being with him; and to choose such Lords as Burlington, and Cobham, and Bolingbroke? Bathurst was negative, a pleasing man; and I have heard no ill of Marchmont;—and then always saying, ‘I do not value you for being a Lord;’ which was a sure proof that he did. I never say, I do not value Boswell more for being born to an estate, because I do not care.” BOSWELL. “Nor for being a Scotchman?” JOHNSON. “Nay, sir, I do value you more for being a Scotchman. You are a Scotchman without the faults of Scotchmen. You would not have been so valuable as you are, had you not been a Scotchman.”

Talking of divorces, I asked if Othello’s doctrine was not plausible;

“He that is robb’d, not wanting what is stolen,  
Let him not know’t, and he’s not robb’d at all.”

Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale joined against this. JOHNSON. “Ask any man if he’d wish not to know of such an injury.” BOSWELL. “Would you tell your friend to make him unhappy?” JOHNSON. “Perhaps, sir, I should not; but that would be from prudence on my own account. A man



would tell his father." BOSWELL. "Yes; because he would not have spurious children to get any share of the family inheritance." MRS. THRALE. "Or he would tell his brother." BOSWELL. "Certainly his *elder* brother." JOHNSON. "You would tell your friend of a woman's infamy, to prevent his marrying a whore: there is the same reason to tell him of his wife's infidelity, when he is married, to prevent the consequences of imposition. It is a breach of confidence not to tell a friend." BOSWELL. "Would you tell Mr. ——— (naming a gentleman who assuredly was not in the least danger of such a miserable disgrace, though married to a fine woman)?" JOHNSON. "No, sir; because it would do no good: he is so sluggish, he'd never go to parliament and get through a divorce."

He said of one of our friends, "He is ruining himself without pleasure. A man who loses at play, or who runs out his fortune at court, makes his estate less, in hopes of making it bigger (I am sure of this word, which was often used by him): but it is a sad thing to pass through the quagmire of parsimony to the gulf of ruin. To pass over the flowery path of extravagance is very well."

Amongst the numerous prints pasted on the walls of the dining room at Streatham, was Hogarth's "Modern Midnight Conversation." I asked him what he knew of Parson Ford, who makes a conspicuous figure in the riotous group. JOHNSON. "Sir, he was my acquaintance and relation, my mother's nephew. He had purchased a living in the country, but not simoniacally. I never saw him but in the country. I have been told he was a man of great parts; very profligate, but I never heard he was impious." BOSWELL. "Was there not a story of his ghost having appeared?" JOHNSON. "Sir, it was be-

lieved. A waiter at the Hummums, in which house Ford died, had been absent for some time, and returned, not knowing that Ford was dead. Going down to the cellar, according to the story, he met him; going down again, he met him a second time. When he came up, he asked some of the people of the house what Ford could be doing there. They told him Ford was dead. The waiter took a fever, in which he lay for some time. When he recovered he said he had a message to deliver to some women from Ford; but he was not to tell what, or to whom. He walked out; he was followed; but somewhere about St. Paul's they lost him. He came back, and said he had delivered the message, and the women exclaimed, 'Then we are all undone!' Dr. Pellet, who was not a credulous man, inquired into the truth of this story, and he said, the evidence was irresistible. My wife went to the Hummums (it is a place where people get themselves cupped). I believe she went with intention to hear about this story of Ford. At first they were unwilling to tell her; but, after they had talked to her, she came away satisfied that it was true. To be sure, the man had a fever; and this vision may have been the beginning of it. But if the message to the women, and their behaviour upon it, were true as related, there was something supernatural. That rests upon his word; and there it remains."

After Mrs. Thrale was gone to bed, Johnson and I sat up late. We resumed Sir Joshua Reynolds's argument on the preceding Sunday, that a man would be virtuous, though he had no other motive than to preserve his character. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is not true; for, as to this world, vice does not hurt a man's character." BOSWELL. "Yes, sir, debauching a friend's wife will." JOHN-



continuing a dispute, to see what a man will answer,—to make him your butt (angrier still)!"

BOSWELL. "My dear sir, I had no such intention as you seem to suspect: I had not indeed. Might not this nobleman have felt every thing 'weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,' as Hamlet says?" JOHNSON. "Nay, if you are to bring in gabble, I'll talk no more. I will not, upon my honour."—My readers will decide upon this dispute.

Next morning I stated to Mrs. Thrale at breakfast, before he came down, the dispute of last night as to the influence of character upon success in life. She said he was certainly wrong; and told me that a Baronet lost an election in Wales, because he had debauched the sister of a gentleman in the county, whom he made one of his daughters invite as her companion at his seat in the country, when his lady and his other children were in London. But she would not encounter Johnson upon the subject.

I staid all this day with him at Streatham. He talked a great deal in very good humour.

Looking at Messrs. Dilly's splendid edition of Lord Chesterfield's miscellaneous works, he laughed, and said; "Here are now two speeches ascribed to him, both of which were written by me: and the best of it is, they have found out that one is like Demosthenes, and the other like Cicero."

He censured Lord Kames's "Sketches of the History of Man," for misrepresenting Clarendon's account of the appearance of Sir George Villiers's ghost, as if Clarendon were weakly credulous; when the truth is that Clarendon only says, that the story was upon a better foundation of credit than usually such discourses are founded upon; nay, speaks thus of the person who was reported



I to live in the country, I would not devote myself to the acquisition of popularity; I would live in a much better way, much more happily; I would have my time at my own command." BOSWELL. "But, sir, is it not a sad thing to be at a distance from all our literary friends?" JOHNSON. "Sir, you will by and by have enough of this conversation, which now delights you so much."

As he was a zealous friend of subordination, he was at all times watchful to repress the vulgar cant against the manners of the great: "High people, sir (said he), are the best; take a hundred ladies of quality, you'll find them better wives, better mothers, more willing to sacrifice their own pleasure to their children, than a hundred other women. Tradeswomen (I mean the wives of tradesmen) in the city, who are worth from ten to fifteen thousand pounds, are the worst creatures upon the earth, grossly ignorant, and thinking viciousness fashionable. Farmers, I think, are often worthless fellows. Few lords will cheat; and if they do, they'll be ashamed of it: farmers cheat, and are not ashamed of it: they have all the sensual vices too of the nobility, with cheating into the bargain. There is as much fornication and adultery amongst farmers as amongst noblemen." BOSWELL. "The notion of the world, sir, however, is, that the morals of women of quality are worse than those in lower stations." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, the licentiousness of one woman of quality makes more noise than that of a number of women in lower stations; then, sir, you are to consider the malignity of women in the city against women of quality, which will make them believe any thing of them, such as that they call their coachmen to bed. No, sir, so far as I have observed, the higher in rank, the richer la-



The disaster of General Burgoyne's army was then the common topick of conversation. It was asked why piling their arms was insisted upon as a matter of such consequence when it seemed to be a circumstance so inconsiderable in itself.

JOHNSON. "Why, sir, a French authour says, '*Il y a beaucoup de puerilités dans la guerre.*' All distinctions are trifles, because great things can seldom occur, and those distinctions are settled by custom. A savage would as willingly have his meat sent to him in the kitchen as eat it at the table here: as men become civilised, various modes of denoting honourable preference are invented."

He this day made the observations upon the similarity between "Rasselas" and "Candide": which I have inserted in its proper place when considering his admirable philosophical Romance. He said "*Candide*" he thought had more power in it than any thing that *Voltaire* had written.

He said, "The lyrical part of Horace never can be perfectly translated; so much of excellence is in the numbers and the expression. Francis has done it the best; I'll take his, five out of six, against them all."

On Sunday, May 17, I presented to him Mr. Fullarton, of Fullarton, who has since distinguished himself so much in India, to whom he naturally talked of travels, as Mr. Brydone accompanied him in his tour to Sicily and Malta. He said, "The information which we have from modern travellers is much more authentick than what we had from ancient travellers; ancient travellers guessed; modern travellers measure. The Swiss admit that there is but one error in Stanyan. If Brydone were more attentive to his Bible, he would be a good traveller."

He said, "Lord Chatham was a Dictator; he



possessed the power of putting the State in motion; now there is no power, all order is relaxed."

BOSWELL. "Is there no hope of a change to the better?" JOHNSON. "Why, yes, sir, when we are weary of this relaxation. So the City of London will appoint its Mayors again by seniority." BOSWELL. "But is not that taking a mere chance for having a good or a bad Mayor?" JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, but the evil of competition is greater than that of the worst Mayor that can come; besides, there is no more reason to suppose that the choice of a rabble will be right than that chance will be right."

On Tuesday, May 19, I was to set out for Scotland in the evening. He was engaged to dine with me at Mr. Dilly's; I waited upon him to remind him of his appointment and attend him thither; he gave me some salutary counsel, and recommended vigorous resolution against any deviation from moral duty. BOSWELL. "But you would not have me to bind myself by a solemn obligation?" JOHNSON (much agitated). "What! a vow—O, no, sir, a vow is a horrible thing; it is a snare for sin. The man who cannot go to heaven without a vow—may go—". Here, standing erect in the middle of his library, and rolling grand, his pause was truly a curious compound of the solemn and the ludicrous; he half whistled in his usual way when pleasant, and he paused as if checked by religious awe.—Methought he would have added—to Hell—but was restrained. I humoured the dilemma. "What! sir (said I), '*In cœlum jussus ibit*?' " alluding to his imitation of it;

"And bid him go to Hell, to Hell he goes."

I had mentioned to him a slight fault in his noble "Imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal,"

a too near recurrence of the verb *spread*, in his description of the young Enthusiast at College:

“Through all his veins the fever of renown  
*Spreads* from the strong contagion of the gown;  
 O'er Bodley's dome his future labours *spread*,  
 And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head.”

He had desired me to change *spreads* to *burns*, but for perfect authenticity I now had it done with his own hand<sup>2</sup>. I thought this alteration not only cured the fault, but was more poetical, as it might carry an allusion to the shirt by which Hercules was inflamed.

We had a quiet comfortable meeting at Mr. Dilly's; nobody there but ourselves. Mr. Dilly mentioned somebody having wished that Milton's "Tractate on Education" should be printed along with his Poems in the edition of the English Poets then going on. JOHNSON. "It would be breaking in upon the plan; but would be of no great consequence. So far as it would be any thing, it would be wrong. Education in England has been in danger of being hurt by two of its greatest men, Milton and Locke. Milton's plan is impracticable, and I suppose has never been tried. Locke's, I fancy, has been tried often enough, but is very imperfect; it gives too much to one side, and too little to the other; it gives too little to literature—I shall do what I can for Dr. Watts; but my materials are very scanty. His poems are by no means his best works; I cannot praise his poetry itself highly; but I can praise its design."

My illustrious friend and I parted with assurances of affectionate regard.

I wrote to him on the 25th of May, from Thorpe

<sup>2</sup> The slip of paper on which he made the correction is deposited by me in the noble library to which it relates, and to which I have presented other pieces of his handwriting.

in Yorkshire, one of the seats of Mr. Bosville, and gave him an account of my having passed a day at Lincoln unexpectedly, and therefore without having any letters of introduction, but that I had been honoured with civilities from the Rev. Mr. Simpson, an acquaintance of his, and Captain Broadley, of the Lincolnshire Militia; but more particularly from the Rev. Dr. Gordon, the Chancellor, who first received me with great politeness as a stranger, and, when I informed him who I was, entertained me at his house with the most flattering attention; I also expressed the pleasure with which I had found that our worthy friend, Langton, was highly esteemed in his own county town.

“ TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

“ MY DEAR SIR,                      Edinburgh, June 18, 1778.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ SINCE my return to Scotland, I have been again at Lanark, and have had more conversation with Thomson's sister. It is strange that Murdoch, who was his intimate friend, should have mistaken his mother's maiden name, which he says was Hume, whereas Hume was the name of his grandmother by the mother's side. His mother's name was Beatrix Trotter<sup>3</sup>, a daughter of Mr. Trotter, of Fogo, a small proprietor of land. Thomson had one brother, whom he had with him in England as his amanuensis; but he was seized with a consumption, and having returned to Scotland, to try what his native air would do for him, died young. He had three sisters; one married to Mr. Bell, minister of the parish of Strathaven; one to Mr. Craig, father of the inge-

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Johnson was by no means attentive to minute accuracy in his “Lives of the Poets;” for notwithstanding my having detected this mistake, he has continued it.

nious architect, who gave the plan of the New Town of Edinburgh; and one to Mr. Thomson, master of the grammar school at Lanark. He was of a humane and benevolent disposition; not only sent valuable presents to his sisters; but a yearly allowance in money, and was always wishing to have it in his power to do them more good. Lord Lyttelton's observation, that 'he loathed much to write,' was very true. His letters to his sister, Mrs. Thomson, were not frequent, and in one of them he says, 'All my friends who know me know how backward I am to write letters; and never impute the negligence of my hand to the coldness of my heart.' I send you a copy of the last letter which she had from him; she never heard that he had any intention of going into holy orders. From this late interview with his sister, I think much more favourably of him, as I hope you will. I am eager to see more of your Prefaces to the Poets; I solace myself with the few proof sheets which I have.

"I send another parcel of Lord Hailes's 'Annals,' which you will please to return to me as soon as you conveniently can. He says, 'he wishes you would cut a little deeper;' but he may be proud that there is so little occasion to use the critical knife.

"I ever am, MY DEAR SIR,

"Your faithful and affectionate

"humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

Mr. Langton has been pleased, at my request, to favour me with some particulars of Dr. Johnson's visit to Warley Camp, where this gentleman was at the time stationed as a Captain in the Lincolnshire militia. I shall give them in his own words in a letter to me.

“It was in the summer of the year 1778, that he complied with my invitation to come down to the Camp at Warley, and he staid with me about a week; the scene appeared, notwithstanding a great degree of ill health that he seemed to labour under, to interest and amuse him, as agreeing with the disposition that I believe you know he constantly manifested towards inquiring into subjects of the military kind. He sat, with a patient degree of attention, to observe the proceedings of a regimental court martial, that happened to be called in the time of his stay with us; and one night, as late as at eleven o'clock, he accompanied the Major of the regiment in going what are styled the *Rounds*, where he might observe the forms of visiting the guards, for the seeing that they and their sentries are ready in their duty on their several posts. He took occasion to converse at times on military topicks, one in particular that I see the mention of in your ‘Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides,’ which lies open before me<sup>4</sup>, as to gunpowder; which he spoke of to the same effect, in part, that you relate.

“On one occasion, when the regiment were going through their exercise, he went quite close to the men at one of the extremities of it, and watched all their practices attentively; and, when he came away, his remark was, ‘The men, indeed, do load their musquets and fire with wonderful celerity.’ He was likewise particular in requiring to know what was the weight of the musket balls in use, and within what distance they might be expected to take effect when fired off.

“In walking among the tents, and observing the difference between those of the officers and

private men, he said, that the superiority of accommodation of the better conditions of life; to that of the inferior ones, was never exhibited to him in so distinct a view. The civilities paid to him in the camp were from the gentlemen of the Lincolnshire regiment, one of the officers of which accommodated him with a tent in which he slept; and from General Hall, who very courteously invited him to dine with him, where he appeared to be very well pleased with his entertainment, and the civilities he received on the part of the General<sup>5</sup>; the attention likewise of the General's aide-de-camp, Captain Smith, seemed to be very welcome to him, as appeared by their engaging in a great deal of discourse together. The gentlemen of the East York regiment likewise, on being informed of his coming, solicited his company at dinner, but by that time he had fixed his departure, so that he could not comply with the invitation."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"SIR,

"I HAVE received two letters from you; of which the second complains of the neglect shown to the first. You must not tie your friends to such punctual correspondence. You have all possible assurances of my affection and esteem; and there ought to be no need of reiterated professions. When it may happen that I can give you either counsel or comfort, I hope it will never happen to me that I should neglect you; but you must not think me criminal or cold if I say nothing when I have nothing to say.

<sup>5</sup> When I one day at Court expressed to General Hall my sense of the honour he had done my friend, he politely answered, "Sir, I did *myself* honour."

“You are now happy enough. Mrs. Boswell is recovered; and I congratulate you upon the probability of her long life. . If general approbation will add any thing to your enjoyment, I can tell you that I have heard you mentioned as *a man whom every body likes*. I think life has little more to give.

“—— has gone to his regiment. He has laid down his coach, and talks of making more contractions of his expense: how he will succeed I know not. It is difficult to reform a household gradually; it may be better done by a system totally new. I am afraid he has always something to hide. When we pressed him to go to ——, he objected the necessity of attending his navigation; yet he could talk of going to Aberdeen, a place not much nearer his navigation. I believe he cannot bear the thought of living at —— in a state of diminution; and of appearing among the gentlemen of the neighbourhood *shorn of his beams*. This is natural, but it is cowardly. What I told him of the increasing expense of a growing family seems to have struck him. He certainly had gone on with very confused views, and we have, I think, shown him that he is wrong; though, with the common deficiency of advisers, we have not shown him how to do right.

“I wish you would a little correct or restrain your imagination, and imagine that happiness, such as life admits, may be had at other places as well as London. Without asserting Stoicism<sup>6</sup> it may be said, that it is our business to exempt ourselves as much as we can from the power of external things. There is but one solid basis of

<sup>6</sup>. [I suspect that this is a misprint, and that Johnson wrote “without affecting Stoicism;”—but the original letter being burned in a mass of papers in Scotland, I have not been able to ascertain whether my conjecture is well founded or not. The expression in the text, however, may be justified. M.]

happiness: and that is, the reasonable hope of a happy futurity. This may be had every where.

"I do not blame your preference of London to other places, for it is really to be preferred, if the choice is free; but few have the choice of their place or their manner of life; and mere pleasure ought not to be the prime motive of action.

"Mrs. Thrale, poor thing, has a daughter. Mr. Thrale dislikes the times, like the rest of us. Mrs. Williams is sick; Mrs. Desmoulins is poor. I have miserable nights. Nobody is well but Mr. Levett.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most, &c.

"London, July 3, 1778."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

In the course of this year there was a difference between him and his friend Mr. Strahan; the particulars of which it is unnecessary to relate. Their reconciliation was communicated to me in a letter from Mr. Strahan in the following words:

"The notes I showed you that passed between him and me were dated in March last. The matter lay dormant till July 27, when he wrote to me as follows:

"TO WILLIAM STRAHAN, ESQ.

"SIR,

"It would be very foolish for us to continue strangers any longer. You can never by persistency make wrong right. If I resented too acrimoniously, I resented only to yourself. Nobody ever saw or heard what I wrote. You saw that my anger was over, for in a day or two I came to your house. I have given you a longer time; and



I hope you have made so good use of it as to be no longer on evil terms with, sir,

‘ Your, &c.

‘ SAM. JOHNSON.’

“ On this I called upon him: and he has since dined with me.”

After this time the same friendship as formerly continued between Dr. Johnson and Mr. Strahan. My friend mentioned to me a little circumstance of his attention, which, though we may smile at it, must be allowed to have its foundation in a nice and true knowledge of human life. “ When I write to Scotland (said he), I employ Strahan to frank my letters, that he may have the consequence of appearing a Parliament man among his countrymen.”

“ TO CAPTAIN LANGTON<sup>7</sup>, WARLEY CAMP.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ WHEN I recollect how long ago I was received with so much kindness at Warley Common, I am ashamed that I have not made some inquiries after my friends.

“ Pray how many sheep stealers did you convict? and how did you punish them? When are you to be cantoned in better habitations? The air grows cold, and the ground damp. Longer stay in the camp cannot be without much danger to the health of the common men, if even the officers can escape.

“ You see that Dr. Percy is now Dean of Car-

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Johnson here addresses his worthy friend, Bennet Langton, Esq. by his title as Captain of the Lincolnshire militia, in which he has since been most deservedly raised to the rank of Major.

lisle; about five hundred a year, with a power of presenting himself to some good living. He is provided for.

“The session of the Club is to commence with that of the parliament. Mr. Banks desires to be admitted; he will be a very honourable accession.

“Did the King please you? The Coxheath men, I think, have some reason to complain: Reynolds says your camp is better than theirs.

“I hope you find yourself able to encounter this weather. Take care of your own health; and, as you can, of your men. Be pleased to make my compliments to all the gentlemen whose notice I have had, and whose kindness I have experienced.

“I am, DEAR SIR,

“Your most humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“October 31, 1778.”

I wrote to him on the 18th of August, the 18th of September, and the 6th of November; informing him of my having had another son born, whom I had called James; that I had passed some time at Auchinleck; that the Countess of Loudoun, now in her ninety-ninth year, was as fresh as when he saw her, and remembered him with respect; and that his mother by adoption, the Countess of Eglintoun, had said to me, “Tell Mr. Johnson I love him exceedingly;” that I had again suffered much from bad spirits; and that as it was very long since I heard from him, I was not a little uneasy.

The continuance of his regard for his friend Dr. Burney appears from the following letters:

"TO THE REVEREND DR. WHEELER, OXFORD.

"DEAR SIR,

"DR. BURNET, who brings this paper, is engaged in a History of Musick; and, having been told by Dr. Markham of some MSS. relating to his subject, which are in the library of your College, is desirous to examine them. He is my friend; and therefore I take the liberty of entreating your favour and assistance in his inquiry: and can assure you, with great confidence, that if you knew him he would not want any intervenient solicitation to obtain the kindness of one who loves learning and virtue as you love them.

"I have been flattering myself all the summer with the hope of paying my annual visit to my friends; but something has obstructed me: I still hope not to be long without seeing you. I should be glad of a little literary talk; and glad to show you, by the frequency of my visits, how eagerly I love it when you talk it. I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"London, Nov. 2, 1778."

"TO THE REVEREND DR. EDWARDS, OXFORD.

"SIR,

"THE bearer, DR. BURNET, has had some account of a Welsh Manuscript in the Bodleian library, from which he hopes to gain some materials for his History of Musick; but, being ignorant of the language, is at a loss where to find assistance. I make no doubt but you, sir, can help him through his difficulties, and therefore take the liberty of recommending him to your favour, as I am sure you will find him a man wor-

thy of every civility that can be shown, and every benefit that can be conferred.

"But we must not let Welsh drive us from Greek. What comes of Xenophon? If you do not like the trouble of publishing the book, do not let your commentaries be lost; contrive that they may be published somewhere. I am, SIR,

"Your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"London, November 2, 1778."

These letters procured Dr. Burney great kindness and friendly offices from both of these gentlemen, not only on that occasion, but in future visits to the university. The same year Dr. Johnson not only wrote to Dr. Joseph Warton in favour of Dr. Burney's youngest son, who was to be placed in the college of Winchester, but accompanied him when he went thither.

We surely cannot but admire the benevolent exertions of this great and good man, especially when we consider how grievously he was afflicted with bad health, and how uncomfortable his home was made by the perpetual jarring of those whom he charitably accommodated under his roof. He has sometimes suffered me to talk jocularly of his group of females, and call them his *Seraglio*. He thus mentions them, together with honest Levett, in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale<sup>8</sup>: "Williams hates every body; Levett hates Desmoulins; and does not love Williams; Desmoulins hates them both; Poll<sup>9</sup> loves none of them."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"It is indeed a long time since I wrote, and I think you have some reason to complain; how-

<sup>8</sup> Vol. ii. page 38.

<sup>9</sup> Miss Carmichael.

ever, you must not let small things disturb you when you have such a fine addition to your happiness as a new boy, and I hope your lady's health restored by bringing him. It seems very probable that a little care will now restore her, if any remains of her complaints are left.

"You seem, if I understand your letter, to be gaining ground at Auchinleck, an incident that would give me great delight.

\* \* \* \* \*

"When any fit of anxiety, or gloominess, or perversion of mind, lays hold upon you, make it a rule not to publish it by complaints, but exert your whole care to hide it; by endeavouring to hide it you will drive it away. Be always busy.

"The CLUB is to meet with the parliament; we talk of electing Banks, the traveller; he will be a reputable member.

"Langton has been encamped with his company of militia on Warley Common; I spent five days amongst them; he signalised himself as a diligent officer, and has very high respect in the regiment. He presided when I was there at a court-martial; he is now quartered in Hertfordshire; his lady and little ones are in Scotland. Paoli came to the camp, and commended the soldiers.

"Of myself I have no great matters to say; my health is not restored, my nights are restless and tedious. The best night that I have had these twenty years was at Fort Augustus.

"I hope soon to send you a few lives to read.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most affectionate,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"November 21, 1778."

About this time the Rev. Mr. John Hussey, who had been some time in trade, and was then a clergyman of the church of England, being about to undertake a journey to Aleppo, and other parts of the East, which he accomplished, Dr. Johnson (who had long been in habits of intimacy with him) honoured him with the following letter:

“TO MR. JOHN HUSSEY.

“DEAR SIR,

“I HAVE sent you the ‘Grammar,’ and have left you two books more, by which I hope to be remembered: write my name in them; we may perhaps see each other no more; you part with my good wishes, nor do I despair of seeing you return. Let no opportunities of vice corrupt you; let no bad example seduce you; let the blindness of Mahometans confirm you in Christianity. God bless you.

“I am, DEAR SIR,

“Your affectionate humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“December 29, 1778.”

Johnson this year expressed great satisfaction at the publication of the first volume of “Discourses to the Royal Academy,” by Sir Joshua Reynolds, whom he always considered as one of his literary school. Much praise indeed is due to those excellent Discourses, which are so universally admired, and for which the authour received from the Empress of Russia a gold snuff box, adorned with her profile in *bas relief*, set in diamonds; and containing what is infinitely more valuable, a slip of paper, on which are written with her Imperial Majesty’s own hand, the following words: “*Pour le Chevalier Reynolds en*

*témoignage du contentement que j'ai ressentie à la lecture de ses excellens discours sur la peinture."*

This year, Johnson gave the world a luminous proof that the vigour of his mind in all its faculties, whether memory, judgment, or imagination, was not in the least abated; for this year came out the first four volumes of his "Prefaces, biographical and critical, to the most eminent of the English Poets,"\* published by the booksellers of London. The remaining volumes came out in the year 1780. The poets were selected by the several booksellers who had the honorary copyright, which is still preserved among them by mutual compact, notwithstanding the decision of the House of Lords against the perpetuity of Literary Property. We have his own authority<sup>1</sup>, that by his recommendation the poems of Blackmore, Watts, Pomfret, and Yalden, were added to the collection. Of this work I shall speak more particularly hereafter.

On the 22d of January, I wrote to him on several topicks, and mentioned that as he had been so good as to permit me to have the proof sheets of his "Lives of the Poets," I had written to his servant, Francis, to take care of them for me.

#### MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, Feb. 2, 1779.

"GARRICK's death is a striking event; not that we should be surprised with the death of any man who has lived sixty-two years<sup>2</sup>; but because there was a *vivacity* in our late celebrated friend

\* Life of Watts.

<sup>2</sup> [On Mr. Garrick's Monument in Lichfield Cathedral, he is said to have died "aged 64 years." But it is a mistake, and Mr. Boswell is perfectly correct. Garrick was baptized at Hereford, Feb. 28, 1716-17, and died at his house in London, Jan. 20, 1779. The inaccuracy of lapidary inscriptions is well known. M.]

which drove away the thoughts of *death* from any association with *him*. I am sure you will be tenderly affected with his departure; and I would wish to hear from you upon the subject. I was obliged to him in my days of effervescence in London, when poor Derrick was my governour; and since that time I received many civilities from him. Do you remember how pleasing it was when I received a letter from him at Inverary, upon our first return to civilised living after our Hebridean journey? I shall always remember him with affection as well as admiration.

“On Saturday last, being the 30th of January, I drank coffee and old port, and had solemn conversation with the Reverend Mr. Falconer, a non-juring bishop, a very learned and worthy man. He gave two toasts, which you will believe I drank with cordiality, Dr. Samuel Johnson, and Flora Macdonald. I sat about four hours with him, and it was really as if I had been living in the last century. The Episcopal Church of Scotland, though faithful to the royal house of Stuart, has never accepted of any *congé d'élire* since the Revolution; it is the only true Episcopal Church in Scotland, as it has its own succession of bishops. For as to the Episcopal clergy who take the oaths to the present government, they indeed follow the rites of the Church of England, but, as Bishop Falconer observed, ‘they are not *Episcopals*; for they are under no bishop, as a bishop cannot have authority beyond his diocese.’ This venerable gentleman did me the honour to dine with me yesterday, and he laid his hands upon the heads of my little ones. We had a good deal of curious literary conversation, particularly about Mr. Thomas Ruddiman, with whom he lived in great friendship.

“Any fresh instance of the uncertainty of life



makes one embrace more closely a valuable friend. My dear and much respected sir, may God preserve you long in this world while I am in it.

"I am ever,

"Your much obliged,

"And affectionate humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

On the 23d of February I wrote to him again, complaining of his silence, as I had heard he was ill, and had written to Mr. Thrale for information concerning him; and I announced my intention of soon being again in London.

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"WHY should you take such delight to make a bustle, to write to Mr. Thrale that I am negligent, and to Francis to do what is so very unnecessary? Thrale, you may be sure, cared not about it; and I shall spare Francis the trouble by ordering a set both of the Lives and Poets to dear Mrs. Boswell<sup>3</sup>, in acknowledgment of her marmalade. Persuade her to accept them, and accept them kindly. If I thought she would receive them scornfully, I would send them to Miss Boswell, who, I hope, has yet none of her mamma's ill will to me.

"I would send sets of Lives, four volumes, to some other friends, to Lord Hailes first. His second volume lies by my bed side; a book surely of great labour, and to every just thinker of great delight. Write me word to whom I shall send besides; would it please Lord Auchinleck? Mrs. Thrale waits in the coach.

"I am, DEAR SIR, &c.

"March 13, 1779."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

<sup>3</sup> He sent a set elegantly bound and gilt, which was received as a very handsome present.

This letter crossed me on the road to London, where I arrived on Monday, March 15, and next morning at a late hour, found Dr. Johnson sitting over his tea, attended by Mrs. Desmoulins, Mr. Levett, and a clergyman, who had come to submit some poetical pieces to his revision. It is wonderful what a number and variety of writers, some of them even unknown to him, prevailed on his good nature to look over their works, and suggest corrections and improvements. My arrival interrupted for a little while the important business of this true representative of Bayes; upon its being resumed, I found that the subject under immediate consideration was a translation, yet in manuscript, of the *Carmen Seculare* of Horace, which had this year been set to musick, and performed as a publick entertainment in London, for the joint benefit of Monsieur Philidor and Signor Baretta. When Johnson had done reading, the authour asked him bluntly, "If upon the whole it was a good translation?" Johnson, whose regard for truth was uncommonly strict, seemed to be puzzled for a moment what answer to make; as he certainly could not honestly commend the performance: with exquisite address he evaded the question thus: "Sir, I do not say that it may not be made a very good translation." Here nothing whatever in favour of the performance was affirmed, and yet the writer was not shocked. A printed "Ode to the Warlike Genius of Britain" came next in view; the bard was a lank bony figure, with short black hair; he was writhing himself in agitation while Johnson read; and, showing his teeth in a grin of earnestness, exclaimed in broken sentences, and in a keen sharp tone, "Is that poetry, sir?—Is it Pindar?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, there is here a great deal of what is called poetry." Then, turn-

ing to me, the poet cried, "My muse has not been long upon the town, and (pointing to the Ode) it trembles under the hand of the great critick."—Johnson, in a tone of displeasure, asked him, "Why do you praise Anson?" I did not trouble him by asking his reason for this question. He proceeded, "Here is an error, sir; you have made *Genius* feminine."—"Palpable, sir (cried the enthusiast); I know it. But (in a lower tone) it was to pay a compliment to the Duchess of Devonshire, with which her Grace was pleased. She is walking across Coxheath, in the military uniform, and I suppose her to be the *Genius* of Britain." JOHNSON. "Sir, you are giving a reason for it; but that will not make it right. You may have a reason why two and two should make five; but they will still make but four."

Although I was several times with him in the course of the following days, such it seems were my occupations or such my negligence that I have preserved no memorial of his conversation till Friday, March 26, when I visited him. He said he expected to be attacked on account of his "*Lives of the Poets*." "However (said he) I would rather be attacked than unnoticed. For the worst thing you can do to an author is to be silent as to his works. An assault upon a town is a bad thing; but starving it is still worse: an assault may be unsuccessful; you may have more men killed than you kill; but if you starve the town, you are sure of victory."

Talking of a friend of ours associating with persons of very discordant principles and characters; I said he was a very universal man, quite a man of the world. JOHNSON. "Yes, sir; but one may be so much a man of the world as to be nothing in the world. I remember a passage in Goldsmith's '*Vicar of Wakefield*,' which he was

afterwards fool enough to expunge: 'I do not love a man who is zealous for nothing.' Boswell. "That was a fine passage." Johnson. "Yes, sir: there was another fine passage too, which he struck out: 'When I was a young man, being anxious to distinguish myself, I was perpetually starting new propositions. But I soon gave this over; for I found that generally what was new was false.'" I said I did not like to sit with people of whom I had not a good opinion. Johnson. "But you must not indulge your delicacy too much; or you will be a *tête-à-tête* man all your life."

During my stay in London this spring, I find I was unaccountably negligent in preserving Johnson's sayings, more so than at any time when I was happy enough to have an opportunity of hearing his wisdom and wit. There is no help for it now. I must content myself with presenting such scraps as I have. But I am nevertheless ashamed and vexed to think how much has been lost. It is not that there was a bad crop this year; but that I was not sufficiently careful in gathering it in. I, therefore, in some instances can only exhibit a few detached fragments.

Talking of the wonderful concealment of the authour of the celebrated letters signed *Junius*; he said, "I should have believed Burke to be Junius, because I know no man but Burke who is capable of writing these letters; but Burke spontaneously denied it to me. The case would have

\* [Dr. Burney, in a note introduced in a former page, has mentioned this circumstance, concerning Goldsmith, as communicated to him by Dr. Johnson; not recollecting that it occurred here.—His remark, however, is not wholly superfluous, as it ascertains that the words which Goldsmith had put into the mouth of a fictitious character in the '*Vicar of Wakefield*,' and which as we learn from Dr. Johnson he afterwards expunged, related, like many other passages in his Novel, to himself. AL.]

been different, had I asked him if he was the authour; a man so questioned, as to an anonymous publication, may think he has a right to deny it."

He observed that his old friend, Mr. Sheridan, had been honoured with extraordinary attention in his own country, by having had an exception made in his favour in an Irish Act of Parliament concerning insolvent debtors. "Thus to be singled out (said he) by a legislature, as an object of publick consideration and kindness, is a proof of no common merit."

At Streatham, on Monday, March 29, at breakfast, he maintained that a father had no right to control the inclinations of his daughters in marriage.

On Wednesday, March 31, when I visited him, and confessed an excess of which I had very seldom been guilty; that I had spent a whole night in playing at cards, and that I could not look back on it with satisfaction: instead of a harsh animadversion, he mildly said, "Alas, sir, on how few things can we look back with satisfaction!"

On Thursday, April 1, he commended one of the Dukes of Devonshire for "a dogged veracity." He said too, "London is nothing to some people; but to a man whose pleasure is intellectual, London is the place. And there is no place where economy can be so well practised as in London: more can be had here for the money, even by ladies, than any where else. You cannot play tricks with your fortune in a small place; you must make a uniform appearance. Here a lady may have well furnished apartments and elegant dress, without any meat in her kitchen."

I was amused by considering with how much

ease and coolness he could write or talk to a friend, exhorting him not to suppose that happiness was not to be found as well in other places as in London; when he himself was at all times sensible of its being, comparatively speaking, a heaven upon earth. The truth is, that by those who from sagacity, attention, and experience have learnt the full advantage of London; its pre-eminence over every other place, not only for variety of enjoyment but for comfort, will be felt with a philosophical exultation. The freedom from remark and petty censure, with which life may be passed there; is a circumstance which a man who knows the teasing restraint of a narrow circle must relish highly. Mr. Burke, whose orderly and amiable domestick habits might make the eye of observation less irksome to him than to most men, said once very pleasantly, in my hearing, "Though I have the honour to represent Bristol, I should not like to live there; I should be obliged to be so much *upon my good behaviour*." In London a man may live in splendid society at one time, and in frugal retirement at another, without animadversion. There, and there alone, a man's own house is truly his *castle*, in which he can be in perfect safety from intrusion whenever he pleases. I never shall forget how well this was expressed to me one day by Mr. Meynell: "The chief advantage of London (said he) is, that a man is always *so near his burrow*."

He said of one of his old acquaintances, "He is very fit for a travelling governour. He knows French very well. He is a man of good principles; and there would be no danger that a young gentleman should catch his manner; for it is so very bad that it must be avoided. In that respect he would be like the drunken Helot."

A gentleman has informed me that Johnson said of the same person, "Sir, he has the most *inverted* understanding of any man whom I have ever known."

On Friday, April 2, being Good Friday, I visited him in the morning as usual; and finding that we insensibly fell into a train of ridicule upon the foibles of one of our friends, a very worthy man, I, by way of a check, quoted some good admonition from "The Government of the Tongue," that very pious book. It happened also remarkably enough that the subject of the sermon preached to us to-day by Dr. Burrows, the rector of St. Clement Danes, was the certainty that at the last day we must give an account of "the deeds done in the body;" and amongst various acts of culpability he mentioned evil speaking. As we were moving slowly along in the crowd from church, Johnson jogged my elbow, and said, "Did you attend to the sermon?"—"Yes, sir (said I), it was very applicable to *us*." He, however, stood upon the defensive. "Why, sir, the sense of ridicule is given us, and may be lawfully used. The authour of 'The Government of the Tongue' would have us treat all men alike."

In the interval between morning and evening service, he endeavoured to employ himself earnestly in devotional exercise; and, as he has mentioned in his "Prayers and Meditations<sup>6</sup>," gave me, "*Les Pensées de Paschal*," that I might not interrupt him. I preserve the book with reverence. His presenting it to me is marked upon it with his own hand, and I have found in it a truly divine unction. We went to church again in the afternoon.

On Saturday, April 3, I visited him at night,

and found him sitting in Mrs. Williams's room, with her and one who he afterwards told me was a natural son<sup>7</sup> of the second Lord Southwell. The table had a singular appearance, being covered with a heterogeneous assemblage of oysters and porter for his company, and tea for himself. I mentioned my having heard an eminent physician, who was himself a Christian, argue in favour of universal toleration, and maintain that no man could be hurt by another man's differing from him in opinion. JOHNSON. "Sir, you are to a certain degree hurt by knowing that even one man does not believe."

On Easter day, after solemn service at St. Paul's, I dined with him: Mr. Allen the printer was also his guest. He was uncommonly silent; and I have not written down any thing, except a single curious fact, which, having the sanction of his inflexible veracity, may be received as a striking instance of human insensibility and inconsideration. As he was passing by a fishmonger who was skinning an eel alive, he heard him "curse it, because it would not lie still."

On Wednesday, April 7, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. I have not marked what company was there. Johnson harangued upon the qualities of different liquors; and spoke with great contempt of claret, as so weak that "a man would be drowned by it before it made him drunk." He was persuaded to drink one glass of it, that he might judge, not from recollection, which might be dim, but from immediate sensation. He shook his head and said, "Poor stuff! No, sir, claret is the liquor for boys; port for men; but he who aspires to be a hero (smiling) must drink brandy. In the first place, the flavour of brandy is most grateful to the palate; and

<sup>7</sup> [Mr. Mauritius Lowe, a painter. M.]



then brandy will do soonest for a man what drinking *can* do for him. There are, indeed; few who are able to drink brandy. That is a power rather to be wished for than attained. And yet (proceeded he), as in all pleasure hope is a considerable part, I know not but fruition comes too quick by brandy. Florence wine I think the worst; it is wine only to the eye; it is wine neither while you are drinking it, nor after you have drunk it; it neither pleases the taste, nor exhilarates the spirits." I reminded him how heartily he and I used to drink wine together when we were first acquainted; and how I used to have a headache after sitting up with him. He did not like to have this recalled, or, perhaps, thinking that I boasted improperly, resolved to have a witty stroke at me: "Nay, sir, it was not the *wine* that made your head ache, but the *sense* that I put into it." BOSWELL. "What, sir! will sense make the head ache?" JOHNSON. "Yes, sir (with a smile), when it is not used to it."—No man who has a true relish of pleasantry could be offended at this; especially if Johnson in a long intimacy had given him repeated proofs of his regard and good estimation. I used to say that as he had given me a thousand pounds in praise, he had a good right now and then to take a guinea from me.

On Thursday, April 8, I dined with him at Mr. Allen Ramsay's, with Lord Graham and some other company. We talked of Shakspeare's witches. JOHNSON. "They are beings of his own creation; they are a compound of malignity and meanness, without any abilities; and are quite different from the Italian magician. King James says in his 'Dæmonology,' 'Magicians command the devils: witches are their servants.' The Italian magicians are elegant be-

ings." RAMSAY. "Opera. witches, not Drury Lane witches."—Johnson observed, that abilities might be employed in a narrow sphere, as in getting money, which he said he believed no man could do without vigorous parts, though concentrated to a point. RAMSAY. "Yes, like a strong horse in a mill; he pulls better."

Lord Graham, while he praised the beauty of Lochlomond, on the banks of which is his family seat, complained of the climate, and said he could not bear it. JOHNSON. "Nay, my Lord, don't talk so: you may bear it well enough. Your ancestors have borne it more years than I can tell." This was a handsome compliment to the antiquity of the House of Montrose. His Lordship told me afterwards that he had only affected to complain of the climate; lest, if he had spoken as favourably of his country as he really thought, Dr. Johnson might have attacked it. Johnson was very courteous to Lady Margaret Macdonald. "Madam (said he), when I was in the Isle of Sky, I heard of the people running to take the stones off the road, lest Lady Margaret's horse should stumble."

Lord Graham commended Dr. Drummond at Naples as a man of extraordinary talents; and added, that he had a great love of liberty. JOHNSON. "He is *young*, my Lord (looking to his Lordship with an arch smile); all *boys* love liberty, till experience convinces them they are not so fit to govern themselves as they imagined. We are all agreed as to our own liberty; we would have as much of it as we can get; but we are not agreed as to the liberty of others: for in proportion as we take, others must lose. I believe we hardly wish that the mob should have liberty to govern us. When that was the case some time ago, no man was at liberty not to have candles

in his windows." RAMSAY. "The result is, that order is better than confusion." JOHNSON. "The result is, that order cannot be had but by subordination."

On Friday, April 16, I had been present at the trial of the unfortunate Mr. Hackman, who, in a fit of frantick jealous love, had shot Miss Ray, the favourite of a nobleman. Johnson, in whose company I dined to-day with some other friends, was much interested by my account of what passed, and particularly with his prayer for the mercy of heaven. He said, in a solemn fervid tone, "I hope he *shall* find mercy."

This day a violent altercation arose between Johnson and Beauclerk, which having made much noise at the time, I think it proper, in order to prevent any future misrepresentation, to give a minute account of it.

In talking of Hackman, Johnson argued, as Judge Blackstone had done, that his being furnished with two pistols was a proof that he meant to shoot two persons. Mr. Beauclerk said, "No; for that every wise man who intended to shoot himself, took two pistols, that he might be sure of doing it at once. Lord ———'s cook shot himself with one pistol, and lived ten days in great agony. Mr. ———, who loved buttered muffins, but durst not eat them because they disagreed with his stomach, resolved to shoot himself; and then he eat three buttered muffins for breakfast, before shooting himself, knowing that he should not be troubled with indigestion: *he* had two charged pistols; one was found lying charged upon the table by him, after he had shot himself with the other."—"Well (said Johnson, with an air of triumph), you see here one pistol was sufficient." Beauclerk replied smartly, "Because it happened to kill him."

And either then or a very little afterwards, being piqued at Johnson's triumphant remark, added, "This is what you don't know, and I do." There was then a cessation of the dispute; and some minutes intervened, during which dinner and the glass went on cheerfully; when Johnson suddenly and abruptly exclaimed, "Mr. Beauclerk, how came you to talk so petulantly to me, as, 'This is what you don't know, but what I know?' One thing *I* know, which *you* don't seem to know, that you are very uncivil." BEAUCLERK. "Because *you* began by being uncivil (which you always are)." The words in parentheses were, I believe, not heard by Dr. Johnson. Here again there was a cessation of arms. Johnson told me, that the reason why he waited at first some time without taking any notice of what Mr. Beauclerk said was because he was thinking whether he should resent it. But when he considered that there were present a young Lord and an eminent traveller, two men of the world with whom he had never dined before, he was apprehensive that they might think they had a right to take such liberties with him as Beauclerk did, and therefore resolved he would not less it pass; adding, "that he would not appear a coward." A little while after this, the conversation turned on the violence of Hackman's temper. Johnson then said, "It was his business to *command* his temper, as my friend Mr. Beauclerk should have done some time ago." BEAUCLERK. "I should learn of *you*, sir." JOHNSON. "Sir, you have given *me* opportunities enough of learning, when I have been in *your* company. No man loves to be treated with contempt." BEAUCLERK (with a polite inclination towards Johnson). "Sir, you have known me twenty years, and however I may have treated others, you may be sure I could

never treat you with contempt." JOHNSON. "Sir, you have said more than was necessary." Thus it ended; and Beauclerk's coach not having come for him till very late, Dr. Johnson and another gentleman sat with him a long time after the rest of the company were gone; and he and I dined at Beauclerk's on the Saturday se'nnight following.

After this tempest had subsided, I recollect the following particulars of his conversation.

"I am always for getting a boy forward in his learning; for that is a sure good. I would let him at first read *any* English book which happens to engage his attention; because you have done a great deal, when you have brought him to have entertainment from a book. He'll get better books afterwards."

"Mallet, I believe, never wrote a single line of his projected life of the Duke of Marlborough. He groped for materials, and thought of it, till he had exhausted his mind. Thus it sometimes happens that men entangle themselves in their own schemes."

"To be contradicted, in order to force you to talk, is mighty displeasing. You *shine*, indeed; but it is by being *ground*."

Of a gentleman who made some figure among the *Literati* of his time (Mr. Fitzherbert), he said, "What eminence he had was by a felicity of manner: he had no more learning than what he could not help."

On Saturday, April 24, I dined with him at Mr. Beauclerk's, with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Jones (afterwards Sir William), Mr. Langton, Mr. Steevens, Mr. Paradise, and Dr. Higgs. I mentioned that Mr. Wilkes had attacked Garrick to me, as a man who had no friend. JOHNSON. "I believe he is right, sir. Οι φίλοι, ου φίλος

—He had friends, but no friend<sup>a</sup>. Garrick was so diffused, he had no man to whom he wished to unbosom himself. He found people always ready to applaud him, and that always for the same thing: so he saw life with great uniformity.” I took upon me, for once, to fight with Goliath’s weapons, and play the sophist.—“Garrick did not need a friend, as he got from every body all he wanted. What is a friend? One who supports you and comforts you, while others do not. Friendship, you know, sir, is the cordial drop, ‘to make the nauseous draught of life go down:’ but if the draught be not nauseous, if it be all sweet, there is no occasion for that drop.” JOHNSON. “Many men would not be content to live so: I hope I should not. They would wish to have an intimate friend, with whom they might compare minds, and cherish private virtues.” One of the company mentioned Lord Chesterfield, as a man who had no friend. JOHNSON. “There were more materials to make friendship in Garrick, had he not been so diffused.” BOSWELL. “Garrick was pure gold, but beat out to thin leaf. Lord Chesterfield was tinsel.” JOHNSON. “Garrick was a very good man, the cheerfulest man of his age; a decent liver in a profession which is supposed to give indulgence to licentiousness; and a man who gave away, freely, money acquired by himself. He began the world with a great hunger for money; the son of a half-pay officer, bred in a family whose study was to make fourpence do as much as others made fourpence halfpenny do. But, when he had got money, he was very liberal.” I presumed to animadvert on his eulogy on Garrick, in his “Lives of the Poets.” “You say, sir, his death eclipsed the gaiety of nations.”

<sup>a</sup> See p. 292.



to come into company without merriment, as for a highwayman to take the road without his pistols."

Talking of the effects of drinking, he said, "Drinking may be practised with great prudence; a man who exposes himself when he is intoxicated has not the art of getting drunk; a sober man who happens occasionally to get drunk readily enough goes into a new company, which a man who has been drinking should never do. Such a man will undertake any thing; he is without skill in inebriation. I used to slink home when I had drunk too much. A man accustomed to self-examination will be conscious when he is drunk, though an habitual drunkard will not be conscious of it. I knew a physician, who for twenty years was not sober; yet in a pamphlet, which he wrote upon fevers, he appealed to Garrick and me for his vindication from a charge of drunkenness. A bookseller (naming him) who got a large fortune by trade, was so habitually and equally drunk that his most intimate friends never perceived that he was more sober at one time than another."

Talking of celebrated and successful irregular practisers in physick, he said, "Taylor" was the most ignorant man I ever knew, but sprightly: Ward, the dullest. Taylor challenged me once to talk Latin with him (laughing). I quoted some of Horace, which he took to be a part of my own speech. He said a few words well enough." BEAUCLERK. "I remember, sir, you said, that Taylor was an instance how far impudence could carry ignorance."—Mr. Beauclerk was very entertaining this day; and told us a number of short stories in a lively elegant manner, and with that

<sup>2</sup> [The Chevalier Taylor, the celebrated Oculist. M.]



air of *the world* which has I know not what impressive effect, as if there were something more than is expressed, or than perhaps we could perfectly understand. As Johnson and I accompanied Sir Joshua Reynolds in his coach, Johnson said, "There is in Beauclerk a predomance over his company, that one does not like. But he is a man who has lived so much in the world that he has a short story on every occasion; he is always ready to talk, and is never exhausted."

Johnson and I passed the evening at Miss Reynolds's, Sir Joshua's sister. I mentioned that an eminent friend of ours, talking of the common remark, that affection descends, said, that "this was wisely contrived for the preservation of mankind; for which it was not so necessary that there should be affection from children to parents, as from parents to children; nay, there would be no harm in that view though children should at a certain age eat their parents." JOHNSON. "But, sir, if this were known generally to be the case, parents would not have affection for children." BOSWELL. "True, sir; for it is in expectation of a return that parents are so attentive to their children; and I know a very pretty instance of a little girl of whom her father was very fond, who once when he was in a melancholy fit, and had gone to bed, persuaded him to rise in good humour by saying, 'My dear papa, please to get up, and let me help you on with your clothes, that I may learn to do it when you are an old man.'"

Soon after this time a little incident occurred which I will not suppress, because I am desirous that my work should be, as much as is consistent with the strictest truth, an antidote to the false and injurious notions of his character which have been given by others, and therefore I infuse every

drop of genuine sweetness into my biographical cup.

" TO DR. JOHNSON.

" MY DEAR SIR,

" I AM in great pain with an inflamed foot, and obliged to keep my bed, so am prevented from having the pleasure to dine at Mr. Ramsay's to-day, which is very hard; and my spirits are sadly sunk. Will you be so friendly as to come and sit an hour with me in the evening? I am ever

" Your most faithful,

" And affectionate humble servant,

" JAMES BOSWELL."

" South Audley Street;  
Monday, April 26."

" TO MR. BOSWELL.

" MR. JOHNSON laments the absence of Mr. Boswell, and will come to him."

" Harley Street."

He came to me in the evening, and brought Sir Joshua Reynolds. I need scarcely say, that their conversation, while they sat by my bedside, was the most pleasing opiate to pain that could have been administered.

Johnson, being now better disposed to obtain information concerning Pope than he was last year<sup>1</sup>, sent by me, to my Lord Marchmont, a present of those volumes of his "Lives of the Poets" which were at this time published, with a request to have permission to wait on him; and his Lordship, who had called on him twice, obligingly appointed Saturday, the first of May, for receiving us.

On that morning Johnson came to me from

<sup>1</sup> See p. 346.

Streatham, and after drinking chocolate at General Paoli's, in South Audley Street, we proceeded to Lord Marchmont's in Curzon Street. His Lordship met us at the door of his library, and with great politeness said to Johnson, "I am not going to make an encomium upon *myself*, by telling you the high respect I have for *you*, sir." Johnson was exceedingly courteous; and the interview, which lasted about two hours, during which the Earl communicated his anecdotes of Pope, was as agreeable as I could have wished. When we came out, I said to Johnson, that, considering his Lordship's civility, I should have been vexed if he had again failed to come. "Sir (said he), I would rather have given twenty pounds than not have come." I accompanied him to Streatham, where we dined, and returned to town in the evening.

On Monday, May 3, I dined with him at Mr. Dilly's; I pressed him this day for his opinion on the passage on Parnell, concerning which I had in vain questioned him in several letters, and at length obtained it in *due form of law*.

"CASE for Dr. JOHNSON's Opinion;  
3d of May, 1779.

"PARNELL, in his 'Hermit,' has the following passage:

'To clear this doubt, to know the world by sight,  
To find if *books* and *swains* report it right;  
(For yet by *swains* alone the world he knew,  
Whose feet came wandering o'er the nightly dew).'

Is there not a contradiction in its being *first* supposed that the Hermit knew *both* what books and swains reported of the world: yet *afterwards* said, that he knew it by swains *alone*?"

"*I think it an inaccuracy.—He mentions two instructors in the first line, and says he had only one in the next<sup>2</sup>.*"

This evening I set out for Scotland.

"TO MRS. LUCY PORTER, IN LICHFIELD.

"DEAR MADAM,

"MR. GREEN has informed me that you are much better; I hope I need not tell you that I am glad of it. I cannot boast of being much better; my old nocturnal complaint still pursues me, and my respiration is difficult, though much easier than when I left you the summer before last. Mr. and Mrs. Thrale are well; Miss has

<sup>2</sup> "I do not (says Mr. Malone) see any difficulty in this passage, and wonder that Dr. Johnson should have acknowledged it to be *inaccurate*. The Hermit, it should be observed, had no actual experience of the world whatsoever: all his knowledge concerning it had been obtained in two ways; from *books*, and from the *relations* of those country swains who had seen a little of it. The plain meaning, therefore, is, 'To clear his doubts concerning Providence, and to obtain some knowledge of the world by actual experience; to see whether the accounts furnished by books or by the oral communications of swains were just representations of it; [I say, *swains*], for his oral or *viva voce* information had been obtained from that part of mankind *alone*, &c.' The word *alone* here does not relate to the whole of the preceding line, as has been supposed, but, by a common license, to the words—*of all mankind*, which are understood, and of which it is restrictive."

Mr. Malone, it must be owned, has shown much critical ingenuity in his explanation of this passage. His interpretation, however, seems to me much too *recondite*. The *meaning* of the passage may be certain enough; but surely the expression is confused, and one part of it contradictory to the other.

[But why *too recondite*?—When a meaning is given to a passage by understanding words in an uncommon sense, the interpretation may be said to be *recondite*, and, however ingenious, may be suspected not to be sound; but when words are explained in their ordinary acceptation, and the explication which is fairly deduced from them without any force or constraint is also perfectly justified by the context, it surely may be safely accepted; and the calling such an explication *recondite*, when *nothing else can be said against it*, will not make it the less just. M.]

been a little indisposed; but she is got well again. They have, since the loss of their boy, had two daughters; but they seem likely to want a son.

"I hope you had some books which I sent you. I was sorry for poor Mrs. Adey's death, and am afraid you will be sometimes solitary; but endeavour, whether alone or in company, to keep yourself cheerful. My friends likewise die very fast; but such is the state of man.

"I am, DEAR LOVE,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"May 4, 1779."

He had, before I left London, resumed the conversation concerning the appearance of a ghost at Newcastle upon Tyne, which Mr. John Wesley believed, but to which Johnson did not give credit. I was, however, desirous to examine the question closely, and at the same time wished to be made acquainted with Mr. John Wesley; for though I differed from him in some points, I admired his various talents, and loved his pious zeal. At my request, therefore, Dr. Johnson gave me a letter of introduction to him.

"TO THE REVEREND MR. JOHN WESLEY.

"SIR,

"MR. BOSWELL, a gentleman who has been long known to me, is desirous of being known to you, and has asked this recommendation, which I give him with great willingness, because I think it very much to be wished that worthy and religious men should be acquainted with each other.

"I am, SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"May 8, 1779."

Mr. Wesley being in the course of his ministry at Edinburgh, I presented this letter to him; and was very politely received. I begged to have it returned to me, which was accordingly done.—His state of the evidence as to the ghost did not satisfy me.

I did not write to Johnson, as usual, upon my return to my family; but tried how he would be affected by my silence. Mr. Dilly sent me a copy of a note which he received from him on the 13th of July, in these words:

“ TO MR. DILLY.

“ SIR,

“ SINCE Mr. Boswell's departure I have never heard from him; please to send word what you know of him, and whether you have sent my books to his lady. I am, &c.

“ SAM. JOHNSON.”

My readers will not doubt that his solicitude about me was very flattering.

“ TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ WHAT can possibly have happened that keeps us two such strangers to each other? I expected to have heard from you when you came home; I expected afterwards. I went into the country and returned, and yet there is no letter from Mr. Boswell. No ill I hope has happened; and if ill should happen, why should it be concealed from him who loves you? Is it a fit of humour that has disposed you to try who can hold out longest without writing? If it be, you have the victory. But I am afraid of something bad; set me free from my suspicions.

“ My thoughts are at present employed in

guessing the reason of your silence: you must not expect that I should tell you any thing, if I had any thing to tell. Write, pray write to me, and let me know what is, or what has been the cause of this long interruption.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your most affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"July 13, 1779."

"TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Edinburgh, July 17, 1779:

"WHAT may be justly denominated a supine indolence of mind has been my state of existence since I last returned to Scotland. In a livelier state I had often suffered severely from long intervals of silence on your part; and I had even been chid by you for expressing my uneasiness. I was willing to take advantage of my insensibility, and while I could bear the experiment, to try whether your affection for me would, after an unusual silence on my part, make you write first. This afternoon I have had very high satisfaction by receiving your kind letter of inquiry, for which I most gratefully thank you. I am doubtful if it was right to make the experiment; though I have gained by it. I was beginning to grow tender, and to upbraid myself, especially after having dreamed two nights ago that I was with you. I and my wife, and my four children, are all well. I would not delay one post to answer your letter; but as it is late, I have not time to do more. You shall soon hear from me upon many and various particulars; and I shall never again put you to any test. I am, with veneration,

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Your much obliged,

"And faithful humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

On the 22d of July I wrote to him again; and gave him an account of my last interview with my worthy friend, Mr. Edward Dilly, at his brother's house at Southill in Bedfordshire, where he died soon after I parted from him, leaving me a very kind remembrance of his regard.

I informed him that Lord Hailes, who had promised to furnish him with some anecdotes for his "Lives of the Poets," had sent me three instances of Prior's borrowing from *Gombauld*, in "*Recueil des Poetes*," tome 3. Epigram "To John I owed great obligation," p. 25. "To the Duke of Noailles," p. 32. "Sauntering Jack and Idle Joan," p. 25.

My letter was a pretty long one, and contained a variety of particulars; but he, it should seem, had not attended to it; for his next to me was as follows:

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"ARE you playing the same trick again, and trying who can keep silence longest? Remember that all tricks are either knavish or childish; and that it is as foolish to make experiments upon the constancy of a friend as upon the chastity of a wife.

"What can be the cause of this second fit of silence I cannot conjecture; but after one trick, I will not be cheated by another, nor will harass my thoughts with conjectures about the motives of a man who, probably, acts only by caprice. I therefore suppose you are well, and that Mrs. Boswell is well too; and that the fine summer has restored Lord Auchinleck. I am much better than you left me; I think I am better than when I was in Scotland.

"I forgot whether I informed you that poor



Thrale has been in great danger. Mrs. Thrale likewise has miscarried, and been much indisposed. Every body else is well; Langton is in camp. I intend to put Lord Hailes's description of Dryden<sup>3</sup> into another edition, and as I know his accuracy, wish he would consider the dates, which I could not always settle to my own mind.

"Mr. Thrale goes to Brighthelmstone about Michaelmas, to be jolly and ride a hunting. I shall go to town, or perhaps to Oxford. Exercise and gaiety, or rather carelessness, will I hope dissipate all remains of his malady; and I likewise hope by the change of place to find some opportunities of growing yet better myself.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Streatham, Sept. 9, 1779."

My readers will not be displeased at being told every slight circumstance of the manner in which Dr. Johnson contrived to amuse his solitary hours. He sometimes employed himself in chymistry, sometimes in watering and pruning a vine, sometimes in small experiments, at which those who may smile should recollect that there are moments which admit of being soothed only by trifles<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Which I communicated to him from his Lordship, but it has not yet been published. I have a copy of it.

[The few notices concerning Dryden, which Lord Hailes had collected, the authour afterwards gave to Mr. Malone. *ML*]

<sup>4</sup> In one of his manuscript Diaries there is the following entry, which marks his curious minute attention: "July 26, 1768. I shaved my nail by accident in whetting the knife, about an eighth of an inch from the bottom, and about a fourth from the top. This I measure that I may know the growth of nails; the whole is about five eighths of an inch."

Another of the same kind appears, "Aug. 7, 1779. *Partem brachii dextri carpo proximam et cutem pectoris circa mamillam dextram rasi, ut notum fieret quanto temporis pili renovarentur.*"

And, "Aug. 15, 1763. I cut from the vine 41 leaves, which weighed five oz. and a half and eight scruples:—I lay them upon my bookcase to see what weight they will lose by drying."

On the 20th of September I defended myself against his suspicion of me, which I did not deserve; and added, "Pray let us write frequently, A. whom strikes me, that we should send off a sheet once a week, like a stage coach, whether it be full or not; nay, though it should be empty. The very sight of your handwriting would comfort me; and were a sheet to be thus sent regularly, we should much oftener convey something, were it only a few kind words."

My friend Colonel James Stuart, second son of the Earl of Bute, who had distinguished himself as a good officer of the Bedfordshire militia, had taken a publick spirited resolution to serve his country in its difficulties, by raising a regular regiment, and taking the command of it himself. This, in the heir of the immense property of Wortley, was highly honourable. Having been in Scotland recruiting, he obligingly asked me to accompany him to Leeds, then the head quarters of his corps; from thence to London for a short time, and afterwards to other places to which the regiment might be ordered. Such an offer, at a time of the year when I had full leisure, was very pleasing; especially as I was to accompany a man of sterling good sense, information, discernment, and conviviality; and was to have a second crop in one year of London and Johnson. Of this I informed my illustrious friend, in characteristic warm terms, in a letter dated the 30th of September, from Leeds.

On Monday, October 4, I called at his house before he was up. He sent for me to his bedside, and expressed his satisfaction at this incidental meeting with as much vivacity as if he had been in the gaiety of youth. He called briskly, "Frank, go and get coffee, and let us breakfast *in splendour*."

During this visit to London I had several inter-

views with him, which it is unnecessary to distinguish particularly. I consulted him as to the appointment of guardians to my children in case of my death. "Sir (said he), do not appoint a number of guardians. When there are many, they trust one to another, and the business is neglected. I would advise you to choose only one; let him be a man of respectable character, who, for his own credit, will do what is right; let him be a rich man, so that he may be under no temptation to take advantage; and let him be a man of business, who is used to conduct affairs with ability and expertness, to whom therefore the execution of the trust will not be burdensome."

On Sunday, October 10, we dined together at Mr. Strahan's. The conversation having turned on the prevailing practice of going to the East Indies in quest of wealth;—JOHNSON. "A man had better have ten thousand pounds at the end of ten years passed in England than twenty thousand pounds at the end of ten years passed in India, because you must compute what you *give* for money; and a man who has lived ten years in India has given up ten years of social comfort, and all those advantages which arise from living in England. The ingenious Mr. Brown, distinguished by the name of *Capability Brown*, told me, that he was once at the seat of Lord Clive, who had returned from India with great wealth; and that he showed him at the door of his bed-chamber a large chest, which he said he had once had full of gold; upon which Brown observed, 'I am glad you can bear it so near your bed-chamber.'"

We talked of the state of the poor in London.—JOHNSON. "Saunders Welch, the Justice, who was once High-Constable of Holborn, and had the best opportunities of knowing the state of

the poor, told me, that I underrated the number when I computed that twenty a week, that is, above a thousand a year, died of hunger; not absolutely of immediate hunger; but of the wasting and other diseases which are the consequences of hunger. This happens only in so large a place as London, where people are not known. What we are told about the great sums got by begging is not true: the trade is overstocked. And, you may depend upon it, there are many who cannot get work. A particular kind of manufacture fails: those who have been used to work at it can, for some time, work at nothing else. You meet a man begging; you charge him with idleness: he says, 'I am willing to labour. Will you give me work?'—'I cannot.'—'Why then you have no right to charge me with idleness.'"

We left Mr. Strahan's at seven, as Johnson had said he intended to go to evening prayers. As we walked along, he complained of a little gout in his toe, and said, "I shan't go to prayers to-night; I shall go to-morrow: whenever I miss church on a Sunday, I resolve to go another day. But I do not always do it." This was a fair exhibition of that vibration between pious resolutions and indolence, which many of us have too often experienced.

I went home with him, and we had a long quiet conversation.

I read him a letter from Dr. Hugh Blair concerning Pope (in writing whose life he was now employed), which I shall insert as a literary curiosity<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The Rev. Dr. Law, Bishop of Carlisle, in the Preface to his valuable edition of Archbishop King's "Essay on the Origin of Evil," mentions that the principles maintained in it had been adopted by Pope in his "Essay on Man;" and adds, "The fact, notwithstanding such denial (Bishop Warburton's), might have been strictly verified by an unexceptionable testimony, *viz.* that of the late Lord Ba-



keep a journal of what passed when I was at London; which I wrote out every evening, I find the particulars of the above information, just as I have now given them, distinctly marked; and am thence enabled to fix this conversation to have passed on Friday, the 22d of April, 1763.

"I remember also distinctly (though I have not for this the authority of my journal), that the conversation going on concerning Mr. Pope, I took notice of a report which had been sometimes propagated, that he did not understand Greek: Lord Bathurst said to me, that he knew that to be false; for that part of the *Iliad* was translated by Mr. Pope in his house in the country; and that in the morning when they assembled at breakfast, Mr. Pope used frequently to repeat, with great rapture, the Greek lines which he had been translating, and then to give them his version of them, and to compare them together.

"If these circumstances can be of any use to Dr. Johnson, you have my full liberty to give them to him. I beg you will at the same time present to him my most respectful compliments, with best wishes for his success and fame in all his literary undertakings. I am, with great respect, MY DEAREST SIR,

"Your most affectionate,

"And obliged humble servant,

"HUGH BLAIR."

"Broughton Park, Sept. 21, 1779."

JOHNSON. "Depend upon it, sir, this is too strongly stated. Pope may have had from Bolingbroke the philosophick *stamina* of his Essay; and admitting this to be true, Lord Bathurst did not intentionally falsify. But the thing is not true in the latitude that Blair seems to imagine; we are sure that the poetical imagery, which makes

a great part of the poem, was Pope's own. It is amazing, sir, what deviations there are from precise truth in the account which is given of almost every thing. I told Mrs. Thrale, 'You have so little anxiety about truth, that you never tax your memory with the exact thing.' Now what is the use of the memory to truth if one is careless of exactness? Lord Hailes's 'Annals of Scotland' are very exact; but they contain mere dry particulars. They are to be considered as a Dictionary. You know such things are there; and may be looked at when you please. Robertson paints; but the misfortune is, you are sure he does not know the people whom he paints; so you cannot suppose a likeness. Characters should never be given by an historian, unless he knew the people whom he describes, or copies from those who knew them."

BOSWELL. "Why, sir, do people play this trick which I observe now, when I look at your grate, putting the shovel against it to make the fire burn?" JOHNSON. "They play the trick, but it does not make the fire burn<sup>o</sup>. *There* is a better; (setting the poker perpendicularly up at right angles with the grate). In days of superstition they thought, as it made a cross with the bars, it would drive away the witch."

BOSWELL. "By associating with you, sir, I am always getting an accession of wisdom. But perhaps a man, after knowing his own character—the limited strength of his own mind, should not be desirous of having too much wisdom, considering, *quid valeant humeri*, how little he can carry." JOHNSON. "Sir, be as wise as you can; let a man be *aliis lætus, sapiens sibi*:"

<sup>o</sup> [It certainly does make the fire burn: by repelling the air it throws a blast on the fire, and so performs the part in some degree of a blower or bellows. K.]

‘Though pleased to see the dolphins play,  
I mind my compass and my way?’

You may be wise in your study in the morning, and gay in company at a tavern in the evening. Every man is to take care of his own wisdom and his own virtue, without minding too much what others think.”

He said, “Dodsley first mentioned to me the scheme of an English Dictionary; but I had long thought of it.” BOSWELL. “You did not know what you were undertaking.” JOHNSON. “Yes, sir, I knew very well what I was undertaking,—and very well how to do it,—and have done it very well.” BOSWELL. “An excellent climax! and it *has* availed you. In your Preface you say, “What would it avail me in this gloom of solitude?” You have been agreeably mistaken.”

In his life of Milton, he observes, “I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.” I had, before I read this observation, been desirous of showing that respect to Johnson by various inquiries. Finding him this evening in a very good humour, I prevailed on him to give me an exact list of his places of residence, since he entered the metropolis as an authour, which I subjoin in a note<sup>8</sup>.

I mentioned to him a dispute between a friend of mine and his lady, concerning conjugal infi-

<sup>7</sup> The Spleen, a Poem.

<sup>8</sup> 1. Exeter Street, off Catherine Street, Strand.

2. Greenwich.

3. Woodstock Street, near Hanover Square.

4. Castle Street, Cavendish Square, No. 6.

5. Strand.



delity, which my friend had maintained was by no means so bad in the husband as in the wife. JOHNSON. "Your friend was in the right, sir. Between a man and his Maker it is a different question: but between a man and his wife, a husband's infidelity is nothing. They are connected by children, by fortune, by serious considerations of community. Wise married women don't trouble themselves about infidelity in their husbands." BOSWELL. "To be sure there is a great difference between the offence of infidelity in a man and that of his wife." JOHNSON. "The difference is boundless. The man imposes no bastards upon his wife."

Here it may be questioned whether Johnson was entirely in the right. I suppose it will not be controverted that the difference in the degree of criminality is very great, on account of consequences: but still it may be maintained that, independent of moral obligation, infidelity is by no means a light offence in a husband; because it must hurt a delicate attachment, in which a mutual constancy is implied, with such refined sentiments as Massinger has exhibited in his play of "The Picture."—Johnson probably at another time would have admitted this opinion. And let it be kept in remembrance that he was very careful not to give any encouragement to irregular conduct. A gentleman, not adverting to the dis-

6. Boswell Court.
7. Strand, again.
8. Bow Street.
9. Holborn.
10. Fetter Lane.
11. Holborn, again.
12. Gough Square.
13. Staple Inn.
14. Gray's Inn.
15. Inner Temple Lane, No. 1.
16. Johnson's Court, No. 7.
17. Bolt Court, No. 8.

inction made by him upon this subject, supposed a case of singular perverseness in a wife, and heedlessly said, "That then he thought a husband might do as he pleased with a safe conscience." JOHNSON: "Nay, sir, this is wild indeed (smiling): you must consider that fornication is a crime in a single man; and you cannot have more liberty by being married."

He this evening expressed himself strongly against the Roman Catholics; observing, "In every thing in which they differ from us they are wrong." He was even against the invocation of Saints; in short, he was in the humour of opposition.

Having regretted to him that I had learnt little Greek, as is too generally the case in Scotland; that I had for a long time hardly applied at all to the study of that noble language, and that I was desirous of being told by him what method to follow; he recommended to me as easy helps, Sylvanus's "First book of the Iliad;" Dawson's "Lexicon to the Greek New Testament;" and "Hesiod," with *Pasoris Lexicon* at the end of it.

On Tuesday, October 12, I dined with him at Mr. Ramsay's, with Lord Newhaven and some other company, none of whom I recollect, but a beautiful Miss Graham<sup>a</sup>, a relation of his Lordship's, who asked Dr. Johnson to hob or nob with her. He was flattered by such pleasing attention, and politely told her he never drank wine; but if she would drink a glass of water he was much at her service. She accepted. "Oho, sir! (said Lord Newhaven) you are caught." JOHNSON. "Nay, I do not see *how* I am caught; but if I am caught, I don't want to get free again. If I am caught, I hope to be kept." Then when

<sup>a</sup> Now the lady of Sir Henry Dashwood, Bart.

the two glasses of water were brought, smiling placidly to the young lady, he said, "Madam, let us *reciprocate*."

Lord Newhaven and Johnson carried on an argument for some time, concerning the Middlesex election. Johnson said, "Parliament may be considered as bound by law, as a man is bound where there is nobody to tie the knot. As it is clear that the House of Commons may expel and expel again and again, why not allow of the power to incapacitate for that parliament, rather than have a perpetual contest kept up between parliament and the people?" Lord Newhaven took the opposite side; but respectfully said, "I speak with great deference to you, Dr. Johnson; I speak to be instructed." This had its full effect on my friend. He bowed his head almost as low as the table, to a complimenting nobleman; and called out, "My Lord, my Lord, I do not desire all this ceremony; let us tell our minds to one another quietly." After the debate was over, he said, "I have got lights on the subject to-day, which I had not before." This was a great deal from him, especially as he had written a pamphlet upon it.

He observed, "The House of Commons was originally not a privilege of the people, but a check for the Crown, on the House of Lords. I remember Henry the Eighth wanted them to do something; they hesitated in the morning, but did it in the afternoon. He told them, 'It is well you did; or half your heads should have been upon Temple Bar.' But the House of Commons is now no longer under the power of the crown, and therefore must be bribed." He added, "I have no delight in talking of publick affairs."

Of his fellow-collegian, the celebrated Mr. George Whitefield, he said, "Whitefield never drew as much attention as a mountebank does;

he did not draw attention by doing better than others, but by doing what was strange. Were Astley to preach a sermon standing upon his head on a horse's back, he would collect a multitude to hear him; but no wise man would say he had made a better sermon for that. I never treated Whitefield's ministry with contempt; I believe he did good. He had devoted himself to the lower classes of mankind, and among them he was of use. But when familiarity and noise claim the praise due to knowledge, art, and elegance, we must beat down such pretensions."

What I have preserved of his conversation during the remainder of my stay in London at this time is only what follows: I told him that when I objected to keeping company with a notorious infidel, a celebrated friend of ours said to me, "I do not think that men who live laxly in the world, as you and I do, can with propriety assume such an authority: Dr. Johnson may, who is uniformly exemplary in his conduct. But it is not very consistent to shun an infidel to-day, and get drunk to-morrow." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, this is sad reasoning. Because a man cannot be right in all things, he is to be right in nothing. Because a man sometimes gets drunk, is he therefore to steal? This doctrine would very soon bring a man to the gallows."

After all, however, it is a difficult question how far sincere Christians should associate with the avowed enemies of religion; for in the first place, almost every man's mind may be more or less "corrupted by evil communications;" secondly, the world may very naturally suppose that they are not really in earnest in religion who can easily bear its opponents; and thirdly, if the profane find themselves quite well received by the pious, one of the checks upon an open declaration of

their infidelity, and one of the probable chances of obliging them seriously to reflect, which their being shunned would do, is removed.

He, I know not why, showed upon all occasions an aversion to go to Ireland, where I proposed to him that we should make a tour. JOHNSON. "It is the last place where I should wish to travel." BOSWELL. "Should you not like to see Dublin, sir?" JOHNSON. "No, sir; Dublin is only a worse capital." BOSWELL. "Is not the Giant's Causeway worth seeing?" JOHNSON. "Worth seeing? yes; but not worth going to see."

Yet he had a kindness for the Irish nation, and thus generously expressed himself to a gentleman from that country, on the subject of a UNION which artful Politicians have often had in view: "Do not make a union with us, sir. We should unite with you only to rob you. We should have robbed the Scotch if they had had any thing of which we could have robbed them."

Of an acquaintance of ours, whose manners and every thing about him, though expensive, were coarse, he said, "Sir, you see in him vulgar prosperity."

A foreign minister of no very high talents, who had been in his company for a considerable time quite overlooked, happened luckily to mention that he had read some of his "*Rambler*" in Italian, and admired it much. This pleased him greatly; he observed that the title had been translated, *Il Genio errante*, though I have been told it was rendered more ludicrously, *Il Vagabondo*; and finding that this minister gave such a proof of his taste, he was all attention to him, and on the first remark which he made, however simple, exclaimed, "The Ambassadors says well;—his Excellency observes—;" And then he expanded and enriched the little that had been said, in so strong

a manner that it appeared something of consequence. This was exceedingly entertaining to the company who were present, and many a time afterwards it furnished a pleasant topick of merriment: "*The Ambassador says well*" became a laughable term of applause when no mighty matter had been expressed.

I left London on Monday, October 18, and accompanied Colonel Stuart to Chester, where his regiment was to lie for some time.

"MR. BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,

Chester, October 22, 1779.

"It was not till one o'clock on Monday morning that Colonel Stuart and I left London; for we chose to bid a cordial adieu to Lord Mountstuart, who was to set out on that day on his embassy to Turin. We drove on excellently, and reached Lichfield in good time enough that night. The Colonel had heard so preferable a character of the George that he would not put up at the Three Crowns, so that I did not see our host, Wilkins. We found at the George as good accommodations as we could wish to have, and I fully enjoyed the comfortable thought that *I was in Lichfield again*. Next morning it rained very hard; and as I had much to do in a little time, I ordered a postchaise, and between eight and nine sallied forth to make a round of visits. I first went to Mr. Green, hoping to have had him to accompany me to all my other friends, but he was engaged to attend the Bishop of Sodor and Man, who was then lying at Lichfield very ill of the gout. Having taken a hasty glance at the additions to Green's museum, from which it was not easy to break away, I next went to the Friery, where I at first occasioned some tumult in the ladies, who

were not prepared to receive *company* so early: but my *name*, which has by wonderful felicity come to be closely associated with yours, soon made all easy; and Mrs. Cobb and Miss Adey reassumed their seats at the breakfast table, which they had quitted with some precipitation. They received me with the kindness of an old acquaintance; and after we had joined in a cordial chorus to *your* praise, Mrs. Cobb gave *me* the high satisfaction of hearing that you said, 'Boswell is a man who I believe never left a house without leaving a wish for his return.' And she afterwards added, that she bid you tell me that if ever I came to Lichfield, she hoped I would take a bed at the Friery. From thence I drove to Peter Garrick's<sup>1</sup>, where I also found a very flattering welcome. He appeared to me to enjoy his usual cheerfulness; and he very kindly asked me to come when I could, and pass a week with him. From Mr. Garrick's I went to the Palace to wait on Mr. Seward. I was first entertained by his lady and daughter, he himself being in bed with a cold, according to his valetudinary custom. But he desired to see me; and I found him dressed in his black gown, with a white flannel nightgown above it; so that he looked like a Dominican friar. He was good humoured and polite; and under his roof too my reception was very pleasing. I then proceeded to Stow Hill, and first paid my respects to Mrs. Gastrell, whose conversation I was not willing to quit. But my sand-glass was now beginning to run low, as I could not trespass too long on the Colonel's kindness, who obligingly waited for me; so I hastened to Mrs. Aston's<sup>2</sup>, whom I found much better than

<sup>1</sup> [This gentleman survived his brother David many years; and died at Lichfield, Dec. 12, 1795, ætat. 86. A. C.]

<sup>2</sup> A maiden sister of Johnson's favourite, Molly Aston, who married Captain Brodie, of the Navy. M.]

I feared I should; and there I met a brother-in-law of these ladies, who talked much of you, and very well too, as it appeared to me. It then only remained to visit Mrs. Lucy Porter, which I did, I really believe, with sincere satisfaction on both sides. I am sure I was glad to see her again; and, as I take her to be very honest, I trust she was glad to see me again; for she expressed herself so, that I could not doubt of her being in earnest. What a great keystone of kindness, my dear sir, were you that morning! for we were all held together by our common attachment to you. I cannot say that I ever passed two hours with more self-complacency than I did those two at Lichfield. Let me not entertain any suspicion that this is idle vanity. Will not you confirm me in my persuasion that he who finds himself so regarded has just reason to be happy?

"We got to Chester about midnight on Tuesday; and here again I am in a state of much enjoyment. Colonel Stuart and his officers treat me with all the civility I could wish; and I play my part admirably. *Lætis aliis, sapiens sibi*, the classical sentence which you, I imagine, invented the other day, is exemplified in my present existence. The Bishop, to whom I had the honour to be known several years ago, shows me much attention; and I am edified by his conversation. I must not omit to tell you that his Lordship admires, very highly, your Prefaces to the Poets. I am daily obtaining an extension of agreeable acquaintance, so that I am kept in animated variety; and the study of the place itself, by the assistance of books, and of the Bishop, is sufficient occupation. Chester pleases my fancy more than any town I ever saw. But I will not enter upon it at all in this letter.

"How long I shall stay here I cannot yet say.



I told a very pleasing young lady<sup>3</sup>, niece to one of the Prebendaries, at whose house I saw her, 'I have come to Chester, madam, I cannot tell how; and far less can I tell how I am to get away from it.' Do not think me too juvenile. I beg it of you, my dear, sir, to favour me with a letter while I am here, and add to the happiness of a happy friend, who is ever, with affectionate veneration,

"Most sincerely yours,

"JAMES BOSWELL.

"If you do not write directly, so as to catch me here, I shall be disappointed. Two lines from you will keep my lamp burning bright."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"Why should you importune me so earnestly to write? Of what importance can it be to hear of distant friends, to a man who finds himself welcome wherever he goes, and makes new friends faster than he can want them? If to the delight of such universal kindness of reception, any thing can be added by knowing that you retain my good will, you may indulge yourself in the full enjoyment of that small addition.

"I am glad that you made the round of Lichfield with so much success: the oftener you are seen, the more you will be liked. It was pleasing to me to read that Mrs. Aston was so well, and that Lucy Porter was so glad to see you.

"In the place where you now are, there is much to be observed; and you will easily procure yourself skilful directors. But what will you do to keep away the *black dog* that worries

<sup>3</sup> Miss Letitia Barnston.

you at home? If you would, in compliance with your father's advice, inquire into the old tenures and old charters of Scotland, you would certainly open to yourself many striking scenes of the manners of the middle ages. The feudal system, in a country half barbarous, is naturally productive of great anomalies in civil life. The knowledge of past times is naturally growing less in all cases not of publick record; and the past time of Scotland is so unlike the present that it is already difficult for a Scotchman to image the economy of his grandfather. Do not be tardy nor negligent; but gather up eagerly what can yet be found<sup>4</sup>.

"We have, I think, once talked of another project, a History of the late insurrection in Scotland, with all its incidents. Many falsehoods are passing into uncontradicted history. Voltaire, who loved a striking story, has told what he could not find to be true.

"You may make collections for either of these projects, or for both, as opportunities occur, and digest your materials at leisure. The great direction which Burton has left to men disordered like you is this, *Be not solitary; be not idle*; which I would thus modify;—If you are idle, be not solitary; if you are solitary, be not idle.

"There is a letter for you, from

"Your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"London, October 27, 1779."

<sup>4</sup> I have a valuable collection made by my Father, which, with some additions and illustrations of my own, I intend to publish. I have some hereditary claim to be an Antiquary; not only from my Father, but as being descended, by the mother's side, from the able and learned Sir John Skene, whose merit bids defiance to all the attempts which have been made to lessen his fame.

“ TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

Carlisle, Nov. 7, 1779.

“ THAT I should importune you to write to me at Chester is not wonderful, when you consider what an avidity I have for delight; and that the *amor* of pleasure, like the *amor nummi*, increases in proportion with the quantity which we possess of it. Your letter, so full of polite kindness and masterly counsel, came like a large treasure upon me, while already glittering with riches. I was quite enchanted at Chester, so that I could with difficulty quit it. But the enchantment was the reverse of that of Circé; for so far was there from being any thing sensual in it that I was *all mind*. I do not mean all reason only; for my fancy was kept finely in play. And why not?—If you please I will send you a copy, or an abridgment of my Chester journal, which is truly a log-book of felicity.

“ The Bishop treated me with a kindness which was very flattering. I told him, that you regretted you had seen so little of Chester. His Lordship bade me tell you, that he should be glad to show you more of it. I am proud to find the friendship with which you honour me is known in so many places.

“ I arrived here late last night. Our friend, the Dean, has been gone from hence some months; but I am told at my inn, that he is very *populous* (popular). However, I found Mr. Law, the Arch-deacon, son to the Bishop, and with him I have breakfasted and dined very agreeably. I got acquainted with him at the assizes here, about a year and a half ago; he is a man of great variety of knowledge, uncommon genius, and, I believe, sincere religion. I received the holy sacrament in

the Cathedral in the morning, this being the first Sunday in the month; and was at prayers there in the morning. It is divinely cheering to me to think that there is a Cathedral so near Auchinleck; and I now leave Old England in such a state of mind as I am thankful to God for granting me.

“The *black dog* that worries me at home I cannot but dread; yet as I have been for some time past in a military train, I trust I shall *repulse* him. To hear from you will animate me like the sound of a trumpet; I therefore hope that, soon after my return to the northern field, I shall receive a few lines from you.

“Colonel Stuart did me the honour to escort me in his carriage to show me Liverpool, and from thence back again to Warrington, where we parted<sup>5</sup>. In justice to my valuable wife, I must inform you she wrote to me, that as I was so happy, she would not be so selfish as to wish me to return sooner than business absolutely required my presence. She made my clerk write to me a post or two after to the same purpose, by commission from her; and this day a kind letter from her met me at the Post Office here, acquainting me that she and the little ones were well, and expressing all their wishes for my return home. I am more and more, MY DEAR SIR,

“Your affectionate

“And obliged humble servant,

“JAMES BOSWELL.”

<sup>5</sup> His regiment was afterwards ordered to Jamaica, where he accompanied it, and almost lost his life by the climate. This impartial order I should think a sufficient refutation of the idle rumour that “there was still something behind the throne greater than the throne itself.”

" TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

" DEAR SIR,

" YOUR last letter was not only kind but fond. But I wish you to get rid of all intellectual excesses, and neither to exalt your pleasures nor aggravate your vexations beyond their real and natural state. Why should you not be as happy at Edinburgh as at Chester? *In culpa est animus, qui se non effugit usquam*. Please yourself with your wife and children, and studies, and practice.

" I have sent a petition<sup>6</sup> from Lucy Porter, with which I leave it to your discretion whether it is proper to comply. Return me her letter; which I have sent, that you may know the whole case, and not be seduced to any thing that you may afterwards repent. Miss Doxy perhaps you know to be Mr. Garrick's niece.

" If Dean Percy can be popular at Carlisle, he may be very happy. He has in his disposal two livings, each equal or almost equal in value to the deanery; he may take one himself, and give the other to his son.

" How near is the Cathedral to Auchinleck, that you are so much delighted with it? It is, I suppose, at least, a hundred and fifty miles off. However, if you are pleased, it is so far well.

" Let me know what reception you have from your father, and the state of his health. Please him as much as you can, and add no pain to his last years.

" Of our friends here I can recollect nothing to tell you. I have neither seen nor heard of Langton. Beauclerk is just returned from Brighthelm-

<sup>6</sup> Requesting me to inquire concerning the family of a gentleman who was then paying his addresses to Miss Doxy.

stone; I am told, much better; Mr. Thrale and his family are still there; and his health is said to be visibly improved; he has not bathed; but hunted.

"At Bolt Court there is much malignity, but of late little open hostility". I have had a cold, but it is gone.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, &c.

"I am, sir,

"Your humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"London, Nov. 13, 1779."

On November 22, and December 21, I wrote to him from Edinburgh, giving a very favourable report of the family of Miss Doxy's lover;—that after a good deal of inquiry I had discovered the sister of Mr. Francis Stewart, one of his amanuenses when writing his Dictionary;—that I had, as desired by him, paid her a guinea for an old pocket-book of her brother's which he had retained; and that the good woman, who was in very moderate circumstances, but contented and placid, wondered at his scrupulous and liberal honesty, and received the guinea as if sent her by Providence.—That I had repeatedly begged of him to keep his promise to send me his letter to Lord Chesterfield, and that this *memento*, like *Delenda est Carthago*, must be in every letter that I should write to him, till I had obtained my object.

In 1780, the world was kept in impatience for the completion of his "Lives of the Poets," upon which he was employed so far as his indolence allowed him to labour.

I wrote to him on January 1, and March 13, sending him my notes of Lord Marchmont's information concerning Pope;—complaining that I had not heard from him for almost four months, though he was two letters in my debt;—that I had suffered again from melancholy;—hoping that he had been in so much better company (the Poets), that he had not time to think of his distant friends; for if that were the case, I should have some recompense for my uneasiness;—that the state of my affairs did not admit of my coming to London this year; and begging he would return me Goldsmith's two poems, with his lines marked.

His friend Dr. Lawrence having now suffered the greatest affliction to which a man is liable, and which Johnson himself had felt in the most severe manner, Johnson wrote to him in an admirable strain of sympathy and pious consolation.

“ TO DR. LAWRENCE.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ AT a time when all your friends ought to show their kindness, and with a character which ought to make all that know you your friends, you may wonder that you have yet heard nothing from me.

“ I have been hindered by a vexatious and incessant cough, for which within these ten days I have been bled once, fasted four or five times, taken physick five times, and opiates, I think, six. This day it seems to remit.

“ The loss, dear sir, which you have lately suffered I felt many years ago, and know therefore how much has been taken from you, and how little help can be had from consolation. He that outlives a wife whom he has long loved sees himself disjoined from the only mind that has

the same hopes, and fears, and interest; from the only companion with whom he has shared much good or evil; and with whom he could set his mind at liberty, to retrace the past or anticipate the future. The continuity of being is lacerated; the settled course of sentiment and action is stopped; and life stands suspended and motionless, till it is driven by external causes into a new channel. But the time of suspense is dreadful.

“Our first recourse in this distressed solitude is, perhaps for want of habitual piety, to a gloomy acquiescence in necessity. Of two mortal beings, one must lose the other; but surely there is a higher and better comfort to be drawn from the consideration of that Providence which watches over all, and a belief that the living and the dead are equally in the hands of God, who will reunite those whom he has separated; or who sees that it is best not to reunite.

“I am, DEAR SIR,

“Your most affectionate

“And most humble servant.

“January 20, 1780.”

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

“DEAR SIR,

“WELL, I had resolved to send you the Chesterfield letter; but I will write once again without it. Never impose tasks upon mortals. To require two things is the way to have them both undone.

“For the difficulties which you mention in your affairs, I am sorry; but difficulty is now very general: it is not therefore less grievous, for there is less hope of help. I pretend not to give you advice, not knowing the state of your affairs; and general counsels about prudence and



frugality would do you little good. You are, however, in the right not to increase your own perplexity by a journey hither; and I hope that by staying at home you will please your father.

“Poor dear Beauclerk<sup>8</sup>—*nec, ut soles, dabis joca*. His wit and his folly, his acuteness and maliciousness, his merriment and reasoning, are now over. Such another will not often be found among mankind. He directed himself to be buried by the side of his mother, an instance of tenderness which I hardly expected. He has left his children to the care of Lady Di, and if she dies, of Mr. Langton, and of Mr. Leicester his relation, and a man of good character. His library has been offered to sale to the Russian ambassador<sup>9</sup>.

“Dr. Percy, notwithstanding all the noise of the newspapers, has had no literary loss<sup>1</sup>. Clothes and movables were burned to the value of about one hundred pounds; but his papers, and I think his books, were all preserved.

“Poor Mr. Thrale has been in extreme danger from an apoplectical disorder, and recovered, beyond the expectation of his physicians; he is now at Bath, that his mind may be quiet, and Mrs. Thrale and Miss are with him.

“Having told you what has happened to your friends, let me say something to you of yourself. You are always complaining of melancholy, and I conclude from those complaints that you are fond of it. No man talks of that which he is desirous to conceal, and every man desires to conceal that of which he is ashamed. Do not pre-

<sup>8</sup> [The Hon. Topham Beauclerk died March 11, 1780. ML]

<sup>9</sup> [Mr. Beauclerk's Library was sold by public auction in April and May, 1781, for 6011*l*. ML]

<sup>1</sup> By a fire in Northumberland House, where he had an apartment, in which I have passed many an agreeable hour.

tend to deny it; *manifestum habemus furem*; make it an invariable and obligatory law to yourself, never to mention your own mental diseases: if you are never to speak of them, you will think on them but little; and if you think little of them, they will molest you rarely. When you talk of them, it is plain that you want either praise or pity; for praise there is no room, and pity will do you no good; therefore, from this hour speak no more, think no more about them.

“Your transaction with Mrs. Stewart gave me great satisfaction; I am much obliged to you for your attention. Do not lose sight of her; your countenance may be of great credit, and of consequence of great advantage to her. The memory of her brother is yet fresh in my mind; he was an ingenious and worthy man.

“Please to make my compliments to your lady and to the young ladies. I should like to see them, pretty loves. I am, DEAR SIR,

“Yours affectionately,

“April 8, 1780.”

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

Mrs Thrale being now at Bath with her husband, the correspondence between Johnson and her was carried on briskly. I shall present my readers with one of her original letters to him at this time, which will amuse them probably more than those well written but studied epistles which she has inserted in her collection, because it exhibits the easy vivacity of their literary intercourse. It is also of value as a key to Johnson's answer, which she has printed by itself, and of which I shall subjoin extracts.

#### MRS. THRALE TO DR. JOHNSON.

“I HAD a very kind letter from you yesterday, dear sir, with a most circumstantial date. You

took trouble with my circulating letter, Mr. Evans writes me word, and I thank you sincerely for so doing: one might do mischief else, not being on the spot.

"Yesterday's evening was passed at Mrs. Montagu's: there was Mr. Melmoth; I do not like him *though*, nor he me; it was expected we should have pleased each other; he is, however, just Tory enough to hate the Bishop of Peterborough<sup>2</sup> for Whiggism, and Whig enough to abhor you for Toryism.

"Mrs. Montagu flattered him finely; so he had a good afternoon on't. This evening we spend at a concert. Poor Queeney's<sup>3</sup> sore eyes have just released her: she had a long confinement, and could neither read nor write, so my master<sup>4</sup> treated her very goodnaturedly with the visits of a young woman in this town, a tailor's daughter, who professes musick, and teaches so as to give six lessons a day to ladies, at five and threepence a lesson. Miss Burney says she is a great performer; and I respect the wench for getting her living so prettily; she is very modest and pretty mannered, and not seventeen years old.

"You live in a fine whirl indeed; if I did not write regularly you would half forget me, and that would be very wrong, for I *felt* my regard for you in my *face* last night, when the criticisms were going on.

"This morning it was all connoisseurship; we went to see some pictures painted by a gentleman artist, Mr. Taylor, of this place; my master makes one every where, and has got a good daw-

<sup>2</sup> Dr. John Hinchliffe.

<sup>3</sup> A kind of nickname given to Mrs. Thrale's eldest daughter, whose name being *Ether* she might be assimilated to a *Queen*.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Thrale.

ling companion to ride with him now. \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* He looks well enough, but I have no notion of health for a man whose mouth cannot be sewed up. Burney and I and Queeney tease him every meal he eats, and Mrs. Montagu is quite serious with him; but what *can* one do? He will eat, I think, and if he does eat I know he will not live; it make me very unhappy, but I must bear it. Let me always have your friendship.

"I am most sincerely, DEAR SIR,

"Your faithful servant,

"H. L. T."

"Bath, Friday, April 28."

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. THRALE.

"DEAREST MADAM,

"MR. THRALE never will live abstinently, till he can persuade himself to live by rule. \* \* \* \*  
 Encourage, as you can, the musical girl.

"Nothing is more common than mutual dislike, where mutual approbation is particularly expected. There is often on both sides a vigilance not over benevolent; and as attention is strongly excited, so that nothing drops unheeded, any difference in taste or opinion, and some difference where there is no restraint will commonly appear, immediately generates dislike.

"Never let criticisms operate on your face or your mind; it is very rarely that an authour is hurt by his criticks. The blaze of reputation cannot be blown out, but it often dies in the socket; a very few names may be considered as perpetual lamps that shine unconsumed. From the authour of 'Fitzosborne's letters' I cannot think myself in much danger. I met him only

I have taken the liberty to leave out a few lines.

once, about thirty years ago, and in some small dispute reduced him to whistle; having not seen him since, that is the last impression... Poor Moore, the fabulist, was one of the company.

“Mrs. Montagu’s long stay, against her own inclination, is very convenient. You would, by your own confession, want a companion; and she is *par pluribus*; conversing with her, you may find variety in one.”

“London, May 1, 1780.”

On the 2d of May I wrote to him, and requested that we might have another meeting somewhere in the North of England, in the autumn of this year.

From Mr. Langton I received soon after this time a letter, of which I extract a passage, relative both to Mr. Beauclerk and Dr. Johnson.

“The melancholy information you have received concerning Mr. Beauclerk’s death is true. Had his talents been directed in any sufficient degree as they ought, I have always been strongly of opinion that they were calculated to make an illustrious figure; and that opinion, as it had been in part formed upon Dr. Johnson’s judgment, receives more and more confirmation by hearing what, since his death, Dr. Johnson has said concerning them: a few evenings ago he was at Mr. Vesey’s, where Lord Althorpe, who was one of a numerous company there, addressed Dr. Johnson on the subject of Mr. Beauclerk’s death, saying, ‘Our Club has had a great loss since we met last.’ He replied, ‘A loss that perhaps the whole nation could not repair!’ The Doctor then went on to speak of his endowments, and particularly extolled the wonderful ease with which he uttered what was highly excellent. He said that ‘no man ever was so free when he was

going to say a good thing, from a *look* that expressed that it was coming; or, when he had said it, from a look that expressed that it had come. At Mr. Thrale's, some days before when we were talking on the same subject, he said, referring to the same idea of his wonderful facility, 'That Beauclerk's talents were those which he had felt himself more disposed to envy than those of any whom he had known.'

"On the evening I have spoken of above, at Mr. Vesey's, you would have been much gratified, as it exhibited an instance of the high importance in which Dr. Johnson's character is held, I think even beyond any I ever before was witness to. The company consisted chiefly of ladies, among whom were the Duchess Dowager of Portland, the Duchess of Beaufort, whom I suppose from her rank I must name before her mother, Mrs. Boscawen, and her elder sister Mrs. Lewson, who was likewise there; Lady Lucan, Lady Clermont, and others of note both for their station and understandings. Among the gentlemen were Lord Althorpe, whom I have before named; Lord Macartney, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Lord Lucan, Mr. Wraxal, whose book you have probably seen, '*The Tour to the Northern Parts of Europe*,' a very agreeable ingenious man; Dr. Warren, Mr. Pepys, the Master in Chancery, whom I believe you know, and Dr. Bernard, the Provost of Eton. As soon as Dr. Johnson was come in, and had taken a chair, the company began to collect round him till they became not less than four, if not five, deep; those behind standing, and listening over the heads of those that were sitting near him. The conversation for some time was chiefly between Dr. Johnson and the Provost of Eton, while the others contributed occasionally their remarks. Without attempting to

detail the particulars of the conversation, which perhaps if I did I should spin my account out to a tedious length, I thought, my dear sir, this general account of the respect with which our valued friend was attended to might be acceptable."

"TO THE REVEREND DR. FARMER.

"SIR,

May 25, 1780.

"I KNOW your disposition to second any literary attempt, and therefore venture upon the liberty of entreating you to procure from College or University registers, all the dates or other informations which they can supply relating to Ambrose Philips, Broome, and Gray, who were all of Cambridge, and of whose lives I am to give such accounts as I can gather. Be pleased to forgive this trouble from,

"SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

While Johnson was thus engaged in preparing a delightful literary entertainment for the world, the tranquillity of the metropolis of Great Britain was unexpectedly disturbed by the most horrid series of outrage that ever disgraced a civilised country. A relaxation of some of the severe penal provisions against our fellow subjects of the Catholick communion had been granted by the Legislature, with an opposition so inconsiderable that the genuine mildness of Christianity united with liberal policy seemed to have become general in this island. But a dark and malignant spirit of persecution soon showed itself, in an unworthy petition for the repeal of the wise and humane statute. That petition was brought forward by a mob, with the evident purpose of in-

timidation, and was justly rejected. But the attempt was accompanied and followed by such daring violence as is unexampled in history. Of this extraordinary tumult Dr. Johnson has given the following concise, lively, and just account in his "Letters to Mrs. Thrale<sup>6</sup>:"

"On Friday<sup>7</sup> the good Protestants met in Saint George's Fields, at the summons of Lord George Gordon, and, marching to Westminster, insulted the Lords and Commons, who all bore it with great tameness. At night the outrages began by the demolition of the masshouse by Lincoln's Inn.

"An exact journal of a week's defiance of government I cannot give you. On Monday Mr. Strahan, who had been insulted, spoke to Lord Mansfield, who had I think been insulted too, of the licentiousness of the populace; and his Lordship treated it as a very slight irregularity. On Tuesday night they pulled down Fielding's house<sup>8</sup>, and burned his goods in the street. They had gutted on Monday Sir George Savile's house, but the building was saved. On Tuesday evening, leaving Fielding's ruins, they went to Newgate to demand their companions, who had been seized demolishing the chapel.—The keeper could not release them but by the Mayor's permission, which he went to ask; at his return he found all the prisoners released, and Newgate in a blaze. They then went to Bloomsbury, and fastened upon Lord Mansfield's house, which they pulled down; and as for his

<sup>6</sup> Vol. ii. p. 143, *et seq.* I have selected passages from several letters, without mentioning dates.

<sup>7</sup> June 2.

<sup>8</sup> [This is not quite correct. Sir John Fielding was, I think, then dead. It was Justice Hyde's house in St. Martin's Street, Leicester Fields; that was gutted, and his goods burnt in the street. B.]



goods they totally burnt them. They have since gone to Caen Wood, but a guard was there before them. They plundered some Papists, I think, and burnt a masshouse in Moorfields the same night."

"On Wednesday I walked with Dr. Scot to look at Newgate, and found it in ruins, with the fire yet glowing. As I went by the Protestants were plundering the Sessions House at the Old Bailey. There were not, I believe, a hundred; but they did their work at leisure, in full security, without sentinels, without trepidation, as men lawfully employed in full day... Such is the cowardice of a commercial place. On Wednesday they broke open the Fleet, and the King's Bench, and the Marshalsea, and Wood Street Compter; and Clerkenwell Bridewell; and released all the prisoners.

"At night they set fire to the Fleet, and to the King's Bench, and I know not how many other places; and one might see the glare of conflagration fill the sky from many parts. The sight was dreadful. Some people were threatened: Mr. Strahan advised me to take care of myself.—Such a time of terror you have been happy in not seeing.

"The King said in council, 'That the magistrates had not done their duty, but that he would do his own;' and a proclamation was published, directing us to keep our servants within doors, as the peace was now to be preserved by force.—The soldiers were sent out to different parts, and the town is now [*June 9*] at quiet.

"The soldiers are stationed so as to be every where within call: there is no longer any body of rioters, and the individuals are hunted to their holes, and led to prison; Lord George was last night sent to the Tower. Mr. John Wilkes was

this day in my neighbourhood, to seize the publisher of a seditious paper."

"Several chapels have been destroyed, and several inoffensive Papists have been plundered, but the high sport was to burn the gaols. This was a good rabble trick. The debtors and the criminals were all set at liberty; but of the criminals, as has always happened, many are already retaken; and two pirates have surrendered themselves, and it is expected that they will be pardoned."

"Government now acts again with its proper force; and we are all under the protection of the King and the law. I thought that it would be agreeable to you and my master to have my testimony to the publick security; and that you would sleep more quietly when I told you that you are safe."

"There has, indeed, been a universal panick; from which the King was the first that recovered. Without the concurrence of his ministers, or the assistance of the civil magistrates, he put the soldiers in motion, and saved the town from calamities, such as a rabble's government must naturally produce."

"The publick has escaped a very heavy calamity. The rioters attempted the Bank on Wednesday night, but in no great number; and like other thieves, with no great resolution. Jack Wilkes headed the party that drove them away. It is agreed that if they had seized the Bank on Tuesday, at the heat of the panick, when no resistance had been prepared, they might have carried irrecoverably away whatever they had found. Jack, who was always zealous for order and decency, declares that if he be trusted with power, he will not leave a rioter alive. There is, how-

ever, now no longer any need of heroism or bloodshed; no blue riband<sup>9</sup> is any longer worn."

Such was the end of this miserable sedition, from which London was delivered by the magnanimity of the Sovereign himself. Whatever some may maintain, I am satisfied that there was no combination or plan, either domestick or foreign; but that the mischief spread by a gradual contagion of frenzy, augmented by the quantities of fermented liquors, of which the deluded populace possessed themselves in the course of their depredations.

I should think myself very much to blame, did I here neglect to do justice to my esteemed friend Mr. Akerman, the keeper of Newgate, who long discharged a very important trust with a uniform intrepid firmness, and at the same time a tenderness and a liberal charity, which entitle him to be recorded with distinguished honour.

Upon this occasion, from the timidity and negligence of magistracy on the one hand, and the almost incredible exertions of the mob on the other, the first prison of this great country was laid open, and the prisoners set free; but that Mr. Akerman, whose house was burnt, would have prevented all this had proper aid been sent him in due time, there can be no doubt.

Many years ago a fire broke out in the brick part which was built as an addition to the old gaol of Newgate. The prisoners were in consternation and tumult, calling out, "We shall be burnt!—we shall be burnt! Down with the gate!—down with the gate!" Mr. Akerman hastened to them, showed himself at the gate, and having, after some confused vociferation of "Hear him—

<sup>9</sup> [Lord George Gordon and his followers, during these outrages, wore blue ribands in their hats. M.]

hear him!" obtained a silent attention, he then calmly told them, that the gate must not go down; that they were under his care, and that they should not be permitted to escape: but that he could assure them they need not be afraid of being burnt, for that the fire was not in the prison, properly so called, which was strongly built with stone; and that if they would engage to be quiet, he himself would come in to them, and conduct them to the further end of the building; and would not go out till they gave him leave. To this proposal they agreed; upon which Mr. Akerman, having first made them fall back from the gate, went in, and with a determined resolution ordered the outer turnkey upon no account to open the gate, even though the prisoners (though he trusted they would not) should break their word, and by force bring himself to order it. "Never mind me (said he), should that happen." The prisoners peaceably followed him while he conducted them through passages of which he had the keys to the extremity of the gaol which was most distant from the fire. Having by this very judicious conduct fully satisfied them that there was no immediate risk, if any at all, he then addressed them thus: "Gentlemen, you are now convinced that I told you true. I have no doubt that the engines will soon extinguish this fire; if they should not, a sufficient guard will come, and you shall be all taken out and lodged in the Compters. I assure you, upon my word and honour, that I have not a farthing insured. I have left my house that I might take care of you. I will keep my promise and stay with you if you insist upon it; but if you will allow me to go out and look after my family and property, I shall be obliged to you." Struck with his behaviour, they called out, "Master Akerman, you have done

bravely; it was very kind in you: by all means go and take care of your own concerns." He did so accordingly, while they remained, and were all preserved.

Johnson has been heard to relate the substance of this story with high praise, in which he was joined by Mr. Burke. My illustrious friend, speaking of Mr. Akerman's kindness to his prisoners, pronounced this eulogy upon his character:—"He who has long had constantly in his view the worst of mankind, and is yet eminent for the humanity of his disposition, must have had it originally in a great degree, and continued to cultivate it very carefully."

In the course of this month my brother David waited upon Dr. Johnson, with the following letter of introduction, which I had taken care should be lying ready on his arrival in London.

"TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"MY DEAR SIR,                      Edinburgh, April 29, 1780.

"THIS will be delivered to you by my brother David, on his return from Spain. You will be glad to see the man who vowed to 'stand by the old castle of Auchinleck, with heart, purse, and sword;' that romantick family solemnity devised by me, of which you and I talked with complacency upon the spot. I trust that twelve years of absence have not lessened his feudal attachment; and that you will find him worthy of being introduced to your acquaintance.

"I have the honour to be,

"With affectionate veneration,

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Your most faithful humble servant,

"JAMES BOSWELL."

Johnson received him very politely, and has thus mentioned him in a letter to Mrs. Thrale<sup>1</sup>: "I have had with me a brother of Boswell's, a Spanish merchant<sup>2</sup>, whom the war has driven from his residence at Valencia; he is gone to see his friends, and will find Scotland but a sorry place after twelve years' residence in a happier climate. He is a very agreeable man, and speaks no Scotch."

"TO DR. BEATTIE, AT ABERDEEN.

"SIR,

"MORE years<sup>3</sup> than I have any delight to reckon have past since you and I saw one another: of this, however, there is no reason for making any reprehensory complaint:—*Sic fata ferunt*. But methinks there might pass some small interchange of regard between us. If you say that I ought to have written, I now write; and I write to tell you that I have much kindness for you and Mrs. Beattie; and that I wish your health better, and your life long. Try change of air, and come a few degrees Southwards; a softer climate may do you both good; winter is coming in; and London will be warmer, and gayer, and busier, and more fertile of amusement than Aberdeen."

"My health is better; but that will be little in the balance when I tell you that Mrs. Montagu has been very ill, and is, I doubt, now but weakly. Mr. Thrale has been very dangerously disordered; but is much better, and I hope will totally recover. He has withdrawn himself from business the whole summer. Sir Joshua and his

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II. p. 163. Mrs. Piozzi has omitted the name, she best knows why.

<sup>2</sup> Now settled in London.

<sup>3</sup> I had been five years absent from London. BEATTIE.

sister are well; and Mr. Davies has got great success as an authour<sup>4</sup>, generated by the corruption of a bookseller. More news I have not to tell you, and therefore you must be contented with hearing what I know not whether you much wish to hear<sup>5</sup>, that I am, SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Bolt Court, Fleet Street,  
August 21, 1780."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"I FIND you have taken one of your fits of taciturnity, and have resolved not to write till you are written to; it is but a peevish humour, but you shall have your way.

"I have sat at home in Bolt Court all the summer, thinking to write the Lives, and a great part of the time only thinking. Several of them, however, are done, and I still think to do the rest.

"Mr. Thrale and his family have, since his illness, passed their time first at Bath, and then at Brightelmstone; but I have been at neither place. I would have gone to Lichfield if I could have had time, and I might have had time if I had been active; but I have missed much, and done little.

"In the late disturbances, Mr. Thrale's house

<sup>4</sup> Meaning his entertaining "Memoirs of David Garrick, Esq." of which Johnson (as Davies informed me) wrote the first sentence; thus giving, as it were, the key-note to the performance. It is, indeed, very characteristic of its authour, beginning with a maxim, and proceeding to illustrate.—"All excellence has a right to be recorded. I shall therefore think it superfluous to apologize for writing the life of a man who, by an uncommon assemblage of private virtues, adorned the highest eminence in a public profession."

<sup>5</sup> I wish he had omitted the suspicion expressed here, though I believe he meant nothing but jocularly; for though he and I differed sometimes in opinion, he well knew how much I loved and revered him. BEATTIE.

and stock were in great danger; the mob was pacified at their first invasion with about fifty pounds in drink and meat; and at their second were driven away by the soldiers. Mr. Strahan got a garrison into his house and maintained them a fortnight; he was so frightened that he removed part of his goods. Mrs. Williams took shelter in the country.

"I know not whether I shall get a ramble this autumn; it is now about the time when we were travelling. I have, however, better health than I had then; and hope you and I may yet show ourselves on some part of Europe, Asia, or Africa<sup>6</sup>. In the mean time let us play no trick, but keep each other's kindness by all means in our power.

"The bearer of this is Dr. Dunbar, of Aberdeen, who has written and published a very ingenious book<sup>7</sup>, and who I think has a kindness for me; and will, when he knows you, have a kindness for you.

"I suppose your little ladies are grown tall; and your son has become a learned young man. I love them all, and I love your naughty lady, whom I never shall persuade to love me. When the Lives are done, I shall send them to complete her collection, but must send them in paper, as for want of a pattern I cannot bind them to fit the rest. I am, SIR,

"Yours, most affectionately,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"London, August 21, 1780."

<sup>6</sup> It will no doubt be remarked how he avoids the *rebellious* land of America. This puts me in mind of an anecdote for which I am obliged to my worthy social friend, Governour Richard Penn: "At one of Miss E. Hervey's assemblies, Dr. Johnson was following her up and down the room; upon which Lord Abington observed to her, 'Your great friend is very fond of you: you can go nowhere without him.'—'Ay (said she), he would follow me to any part of the world.'—'Then (said the Earl), ask him to go with you to America.'"

<sup>7</sup> "Essays on the History of Mankind."



This year he wrote to a young clergyman in the country the following very excellent letter, which contains valuable advice to Divines in general :

“DEAR SIR,

“Not many days ago Dr. Lawrence showed me a letter, in which you make mention of me: I hope, therefore, you will not be displeased that I endeavour to preserve your good will by some observations which your letter suggested to me.

“You are afraid of falling into some improprieties in the daily service by reading to an audience that requires no exactness. Your fear, I hope, secures you from danger. They who contract absurd habits are such as have no fear. It is impossible to do the same thing very often without some peculiarity of manner: but that manner may be good or bad, and a little care will at least preserve it from being bad: to make it good there must, I think, be something of natural or casual felicity, which cannot be taught.

“Your present method of making your sermons seems very judicious. Few frequent preachers can be supposed to have sermons more their own than yours will be. Take care to register, somewhere or other, the authours from whom your several discourses are borrowed; and do not imagine that you shall always remember even what perhaps you now think it impossible to forget.

“My advice, however, is, that you attempt, from time to time, an original sermon; and in the labour of composition, do not burden your mind with too much at once; do not exact from yourself, at one effort of excogitation, propriety of thought and elegance of expression. Invent first, and then embellish. The production of something where nothing was before is an act of greater energy than the expansion or decoration

of the thing produced. Set down diligently your thoughts as they rise in the first words that occur; and when you have matter, you will easily give it form: nor, perhaps, will this method be always necessary; for by habit your thoughts and diction will flow together.

“The composition of sermons is not very difficult: the divisions not only help the memory of the hearer, but direct the judgment of the writer; they supply sources of invention, and keep every part in its proper place.

“What I like least in your letter is your account of the manners of your parish; from which I gather that it has been long neglected by the parson. The Dean of Carlisle<sup>s</sup>, who was then a little rector in Northamptonshire, told me, that it might be discerned whether or no there was a clergyman resident in a parish, by the civil or savage manner of the people. Such a congregation as yours stands in need of much reformation; and I would not have you think it impossible to reform them. A very savage parish was civilized by a decayed gentlewoman, who came among them to teach a petty school. My learned friend Dr. Wheeler, of Oxford, when he was a young man, had the care of a neighbouring parish for fifteen pounds a year, which he was never paid; but he counted it a convenience, that it compelled him to make a sermon weekly. One woman he could not bring to the communion; and when he reproved or exhorted her, she only answered, that she was no scholar. He was advised to set some good woman or man of the parish, a little wiser than herself, to talk to her in a language level to her mind. Such honest, I may call them holy artifices must be practised by

every clergyman; for all means must be tried by which souls may be saved. Talk to your people; however, as much as you can; and you will find, that the more frequently you converse with them upon religious subjects, the more willingly they will attend, and the more submissively they will learn. A clergyman's diligence always makes him venerable. I think I have now only to say, that in the momentous work you have undertaken I pray God to bless you.

"I am, SIR,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Bolt Court, Aug. 30, 1780."

My next letters to him were dated August 24, September 6, and October 1, and from them I extract the following passages:

"My brother David and I find the long indulged fancy of our comfortable meeting again at Auchinleck so well realized that it in some degree confirms the pleasing hope of *O! præclarum diem!* in a future state.

"I beg that you may never again harbour a suspicion of my indulging a pceevish humour, or playing tricks; you will recollect that, when I confessed to you that I had once been intentionally silent to try your regard, I gave you my word and honour that I would not do so again.

"I rejoice to hear of your good state of health; I pray God to continue it long. I have often said, that I would willingly have ten years added to my life, to have ten taken from yours; I mean, that I would be ten years older to have you ten years younger. But let me be thankful for the years during which I have enjoyed your friendship, and please myself with the hopes of enjoying it many years to come in this state of being,

trusting always that, in another state, we shall meet never to be separated. Of this we can form no notion; but the thought, though indistinct, is delightful when the mind is calm and clear.

"The riots in London were certainly horrible; but you give me no account of your own situation during the barbarous anarchy. A description of it by Dr. Johnson would be a great painting; you might write another 'London, a Poem.'"

"I am charmed with your condescending affectionate expression, 'let us keep each other's kindness by all the means in our power:' my revered Friend! how elevating is it to my mind that I am found worthy to be a companion to Dr. Samuel Johnson! All that you have said in grateful praise of Mr. Walmsley I have long thought of you; but we are both Tories, which has a very general influence upon our sentiments: I hope that you will agree to meet me at York about the end of this month; or if you will come to Carlisle, that would be better still, in case the Dean be there. Please to consider, that to keep each other's kindness we should every year have that free and intimate communication of mind which can be had only when we are together. We should have both our solemn and our pleasant talk."

"I write now, for the third time, to tell you that my desire for our meeting this autumn is much increased. I wrote to Squire Godfrey Bosville, my Yorkshire chief, that I should, perhaps, pay him a visit, as I was to hold a conference with Dr. Johnson at York. I give you my word and honour that I said not a word of his inviting you; but he wrote to me as follows: . . .

"I need not tell you I shall be happy to see . . .

"I had not then seen his Letters to Mrs. Thrale: . . .

you here the latter end of this month, as you propose; and I shall likewise be in hopes that you will persuade Dr. Johnson to finish the conference here. It will add to the favour of your own company, if you prevail upon such an associate to assist your observations. I have often been entertained with his writings, and I once belonged to a club of which he was a member, and I never spent an evening there but I heard something from him well worth remembering.

“We have thus, my dear sir, good comfortable quarters in the neighbourhood of York, where, you may be assured, we shall be heartily welcome. I pray you then resolve to set out; and let not the year 1780 be a blank in our social calendar, and in that record of wisdom and wit, which I keep with so much diligence, to your honour, and the instruction and delight of others.”

Mr. Thrale had now another contest for the representation in parliament of the borough of Southwark, and Johnson kindly lent him his assistance, by writing advertisements and letters for him. I shall insert one as a specimen:\*

“TO THE WORTHY ELECTORS OF THE BOROUGH  
OF SOUTHWARK.

“GENTLEMEN,

“A NEW Parliament being now called, I again solicit the honour of being elected for one of your representatives; and solicit it with the greater confidence, as I am not conscious of having neglected my duty, or of having acted otherwise than as becomes the independent representative of independent constituents; superior to fear, hope, and expectation, who has no private purposes to promote, and whose prosperity is in-

volved in the prosperity of his country. As my recovery from a very severe distemper is not yet perfect, I have declined to attend the Hall, and hope an omission so necessary will not be harshly censured.

"I can only send my respectful wishes, that all your deliberations may tend to the happiness of the kingdom, and the peace of the borough.

"I am, GENTLEMEN,

"Your most faithful

"And obedient servant,

"HENRY THRALE."

"Southwark, Sept. 5, 1780."

[**"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LADY SOUTHWELL,**  
**DUBLIN.**

**"MADAM,**

"Among the numerous addresses of condolence which your great loss must have occasioned, be pleased to receive this from one whose name perhaps you have never heard, and to whom your Ladyship is known only by the reputation of your virtue, and to whom your Lord was known only by his kindness and beneficence.

"Your Ladyship is now again summoned to

\* [Margaret, the second daughter and one of the co-heiresses of Arthur Cecil Hamilton, Esq. She was married in 1741 to Thomas George, the third Baron, and first Viscount, Southwell, and lived with him in the most perfect connubial felicity till September, 1780, when Lord Southwell died: a loss which she never ceased to lament to the hour of her own dissolution, in her eighty-first year, August 16, 1802.—The "illustrious example of piety and fortitude," to which Dr. Johnson alludes, was the submitting, when past her fiftieth year, to an extremely painful surgical operation, which she endured with extraordinary firmness and composure, not allowing herself to be tied to her chair, nor uttering a single moan.—This slight tribute of affection to the memory of these two most amiable and excellent persons, who were not less distinguished by their piety, beneficence, and unbounded charity, than by a suavity of manners which endeared them to all who knew them, it is hoped, will be forgiven from one who was honoured by their kindness and friendship from his childhood. ML.]

exert that piety of which you once gave, in a state of pain and danger, so illustrious an example; and your Lord's beneficence may be still continued by those who with his fortune inherit his virtues.

"I hope to be forgiven the liberty which I shall take of informing your Ladyship, that Mr. Mauritius Lowe, a son of your late Lord's father<sup>2</sup> had, by recommendation to your Lord, a quarterly allowance of ten pounds, the last of which, due July 26, he has not received: he was in hourly hope of his remittance, and flattered himself that on October 26 he should have received the whole half year's bounty, when he was struck with the dreadful news of his benefactor's death.

"May I presume to hope that his want, his relation, and his merit, which excited his Lordship's charity, will continue to have the same effect upon those whom he has left behind; and that, though he has lost one friend, he may not yet be destitute. Your Ladyship's charity cannot easily be exerted where it is wanted more; and to a mind like yours, distress is a sufficient recommendation.

"I hope to be allowed the honour of being,

"Madam,

"Your Ladyship's

"Most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."]

"Bolt Court, Fleet Street, London,  
Sept. 9, 1780."

On his birthday Johnson has this note: "I am now beginning the seventy-second year of my

<sup>2</sup> [Thomas, the second Lord Southwell, who died in London, in 1766. Johnson was well acquainted with this nobleman, and said, "he was the highest bred man, without insolence, that he was ever in company with." His younger brother, Edmund Southwell, lived in intimacy with Johnson for many years. (See an account of him

life, with more strength of body, and greater vigour of mind, than I think is common at that age." But still he complains of sleepless nights and idle days, and forgetfulness, or neglect of resolutions. He thus pathetically expresses himself: "Surely I shall not spend my whole life with my own total disapprobation<sup>3</sup>."

Mr. Macbean, whom I have mentioned more than once as one of Johnson's humble friends, a deserving but unfortunate man, being now oppressed by age and poverty, Johnson solicited the Lord Chancellor Thurlow to have him admitted into the Charter House. I take the liberty to insert his Lordship's answer, as I am eager to embrace every occasion of augmenting the respectable notion which should ever be entertained of my illustrious friend :

" TO DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

" SIR,

London, October 24, 1780.

" I HAVE this moment received your letter dated the 19th, and returned from Bath.

" In the beginning of the summer I placed one in the Chartreux, without the sanction of a recommendation so distinct and so authoritative as yours of Macbean; and I am afraid that, according to the establishment of the House, the opportunity of making the charity so good amends will not soon recur. But whenever a vacancy shall happen, if you'll favour me with notice of it, I

in Hawkins's Life of Johnson, p. 405). He died in London, Nov. 22, 1772.

In opposition to the Knight's unfavourable representation of this gentleman, to whom I was indebted for my first introduction to Johnson, I take this opportunity to add, that he appeared to me a pious man, and was very fond of leading the conversation to religious subjects. M.]

<sup>3</sup> Prayers and Meditations, p. 185.



will try to recommend him to the place, even though it should not be my turn to nominate.

"I am, SIR, with great regard,

"Your most faithful

"And obedient servant,

"THURLOW."

"TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"I AM sorry to write you a letter that will not please you, and yet it is at last what I resolve to do. This year must pass without an interview; the summer has been foolishly lost, like many other of my summers and winters. I hardly saw a green field, but staid in town to work, without working much.

"Mr. Thrale's loss of health has lost him the election; he is now going to Brighthelmstone, and expects me to go with him; and how long I shall stay I cannot tell. I do not much like the place, but yet I shall go, and stay while my stay is desired. We must, therefore, content ourselves with knowing what we know as well as man can know the mind of man, that we love one another, and that we wish each other's happiness, and that the lapse of a year cannot lessen our mutual kindness.

"I was pleased to be told that I accused Mrs. Boswell unjustly, in supposing that she bears me ill will. I love you so much that I would be glad to love all that love you, and that you love; and I have love very ready for Mrs. Boswell, if she thinks it worthy of acceptance. I hope all the young ladies and gentlemen are well.

"I take a great liking to your brother. He tells me that his father received him kindly, but not fondly; however, you seem to have lived well

enough at Auchinleck, while you staid: Make your father as happy as you can.

"You lately told me of your health: I can tell you in return, that my health has been, for more than a year past, better than it has been for many years before. Perhaps it may please God to give us some time together before we are parted.

"I am, DEAR SIR,

"Yours, most affectionately,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Oct. 17, 1780."

["TO THE REVEREND DR. VYSE, AT LAMBETH.

"SIR,

"I HOPE you will forgive the liberty I take in soliciting your interposition with his Grace the Archbishop: my first petition was successful, and I therefore venture on a second.

"The matron of the Chartreux is about to resign her place, and Mrs. Desmoulins, a daughter of the late Dr. Swinfen<sup>4</sup>, who was well known to your father, is desirous of succeeding her. She has been accustomed, by keeping a boarding school, to the care of children; and I think is very likely to discharge her duty. She is in great distress, and therefore may properly receive the benefit of a charitable foundation. If you wish to see her, she will be willing to give an account of herself.

"If you shall be pleased, sir, to mention her favourably to his Grace, you will do a great act of kindness to, SIR,

"Your most obliged

"And most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."]

"December 30, 1780."

<sup>4</sup> [See vol. i. p. 49. M.]

Being disappointed in my hopes of meeting Johnson this year, so that I could hear none of his admirable sayings, I shall compensate for this want by inserting a collection of them, for which I am indebted to my worthy friend Mr. Langton, whose kind communications have been separately interwoven in many parts of this work. Very few articles of this collection were committed to writing by himself, he not having that habit; which he regrets, and which those who know the numerous opportunities he had of gathering the rich fruits of *Johnsonian* wit and wisdom must ever regret. I however found, in conversation with him, that a good store of Johnsoniana was treasured in his mind; and I compared it to *Herculaneum*, or some old Roman field, which, when dug, fully rewards the labour employed. The authenticity of every article is unquestionable. For the expression, I, who wrote them down in his presence, am partly answerable.

“Theocritus is not deserving of very high respect as a writer; as to the pastoral part, Virgil is very evidently superiour. He wrote when there had been a larger influx of knowledge into the world than when Theocritus lived. Theocritus does not abound in description, though living in a beautiful country: the manners painted are coarse and gross. Virgil has much more description, more sentiment, more of nature, and more of art. Some of the most excellent parts of Theocritus are, where Castor and Pollux, going with the other Argonauts, land on the *Bebrycian* coast, and there fall into a dispute with *Amycus*, the King of that country; which is as well conducted as Euripides could have done it; and the battle is well related. Afterwards they carry off a woman, whose two brothers come to recover her, and expostulate with Castor and Pollux on

their injustice; but they pay no regard to the brothers, and a battle ensues, where Castor and his brother are triumphant.—Theocritus seems not to have seen that the brothers have the advantage in their argument over his Argonaut heroes.—‘The Sicilian Gossips’ is a piece of merit.”

“Callimachus is a writer of little excellence. The chief thing to be learned from him is his account of Rites and Mythology; which, though desirable to be known for the sake of understanding other parts of ancient authours, is the least pleasing or valuable part of their writings.”

“Mataire’s account of the Stephani is a heavy book. He seems to have been a puzzle-headed man, with a large share of scholarship, but with little geometry or logick in his head, without method; and possessed of little genius. He wrote Latin verses from time to time, and published a set in his old age, which he called ‘*Senilia*,’ in which he shows so little learning or taste in writing as to make *Carteret* a dactyl.—In matters of genealogy it is necessary to give the bare names as they are; but in poetry, and in prose of any elegance in the writing, they require to have inflection given to them.—His book of the Dialects is a sad heap of confusion; the only way to write on them is to tabulate them with Notes, added at the bottom of the page, and references.”

“It may be questioned whether there is not some mistake as to the methods of employing the poor, seemingly on a supposition that there is a certain portion of work left undone for want of persons to do it; but if that is otherwise; and all the materials we have are actually worked up; or all the manufactures we can use or dispose of are already executed, then what is given to the poor who are to be set at work must be taken from some who now have it: as time must be taken

for learning (according to Sir William Petty's observation), a certain part of those very materials that, as it is, are properly worked up must be spoiled by the unskilfulness of novices. We may apply to well meaning, but misjudging persons in particulars of this nature, what Giannone said to a monk who wanted what he called to *convert* him: '*Tu sei santo, ma tu non sei filosofo.*' —It is an unhappy circumstance that one might give away five hundred pounds in a year to those that importune in the streets, and not do any good."

"There is nothing more likely to betray a man into absurdity than *condescension*; when he seems to suppose his understanding too powerful for his company."

"Having asked Mr. Langton if his father and mother had sat for their pictures, which he thought it right for each generation of a family to do, and being told they had opposed it, he said, 'Sir, among the anfractuosities of the human mind, I know not if it may not be one, that there is a superstitious reluctance to sit for a picture.'"

"John Gilbert Cooper related that, soon after the publication of his Dictionary, Garrick being asked by Johnson what people said of it, told him that among other animadversions, it was objected that he cited authorities which were beneath the dignity of such a work, and mentioned Richardson. 'Nay (said Johnson), I have done worse than that: I have cited *thee*, David.'"

"Talking of expense, he observed, with what munificence a great merchant will spend his money, both from his having it at command, and from his enlarged views by calculation of a good effect upon the whole. 'Whereas (said he) you will hardly ever find a country gentleman who is not a good deal disconcerted at an unexpected

occasion for his being obliged to lay out ten pounds.”

“When in good humour, he would talk of his own writings with a wonderful frankness and candour, and would even criticise them with the closest severity. One day, having read over one of his *Ramblers*, Mr. Langton asked him how he liked that paper; he shook his head, and answered, ‘too wordy.’ At another time, when one was reading his tragedy of ‘*Irene*,’ to a company at a house in the country, he left the room: and somebody having asked him the reason of this, he replied, ‘Sir, I thought it had been better.’”

“Talking of a point of delicate scrupulosity of moral conduct, he said to Mr. Langton, ‘Men of harder minds than ours will do many things from which you and I would shrink; yet, sir, they will, perhaps, do more good in life than we. But let us try to help one another. If there be a wrong twist, it may be set right. It is not probable that two people can be wrong the same way.’”

“Of the Preface to Capel’s *Shakspeare*, he said, ‘If the man would have come to me, I would have endeavoured to ‘endow his purposes with words;’ for as it is, he doth ‘gabble monstrously.’”

“He related that he had once in a dream a contest of wit with some other person, and that he was very much mortified by imagining that his opponent had the better of him. ‘Now (said he), one may mark here the effect of sleep in weakening the power of reflection; for had not my judgment failed me, I should have seen that the wit of this supposed antagonist, by whose superiority I felt myself depressed, was as much furnished by me as that which I thought I had been uttering in my own character.’”

“One evening in company, an ingenious and learned gentleman read to him a letter of compli-

ment which he had received from one of the Professors of a Foreign University. Johnson, in an irritable fit, thinking there was too much ostentation, said, 'I never receive any of these tributes of applause from abroad. One instance I recollect of a foreign publication, in which mention is made of *l'illustre Lockman*.<sup>5</sup>'"

"Of Sir Joshua Reynolds, he said, 'Sir, I know no man who has passed through life with more observation than Reynolds.'"

"He repeated to Mr. Langton, with great energy, in the Greek, our Saviour's gracious expression concerning the forgiveness of Mary Magdalen<sup>6</sup>, 'Η πίστις σε σέσωκε σε πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην. 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace'. He said, 'the manner of this dismissal is exceedingly affecting.'"

"He thus defined the difference between physical and moral truth: 'Physical truth is, when you tell a thing as it actually is. Moral truth is, when you tell a thing sincerely and precisely as it appears to you. I say such a one walked across the street; if he really did so, I told a physical truth. If I thought so, though I should have been mistaken, I told a moral truth.'<sup>7</sup>"

"Huggins, the translator of Ariosto, and Mr. Thomas Warton, in the early part of his literary life, had a dispute concerning that poet, of whom Mr. Warton, in his 'Observations on Spenser's Fairy Queen,' gave some account which Huggins attempted to answer with violence, and said, 'I

<sup>5</sup> Secretary to the British Herring Fishery, remarkable for an extraordinary number of occasional verses, not of eminent merit.

<sup>6</sup> [It does not appear that the woman forgiven was Mary Magdalen. K.]

<sup>7</sup> Luke vii. 50.

<sup>8</sup> [This account of the difference between moral and physical truth is in Locke's "Essay on Human Understanding," and many other books. K.]

will *militate* no longer against his *nescience*.' Huggins was master of the subject, but wanted expression. Mr. Warton's knowledge of it was then imperfect, but his manner lively and elegant. Johnson said, 'It appears to me that Huggins has ball without powder, and Warton powder without ball.'"

"Talking of the Farce of 'High Life below Stairs,' he said, 'Here is a Farce which is really very diverting when you see it acted; and yet one may read it and not know that one has been reading any thing at all.'"

"He used at one time to go occasionally to the green room of Drury Lane Theatre, where he was much regarded by the players, and was very easy and facetious with them. He had a very high opinion of Mrs. Clive's comick powers, and conversed more with her than any of them. He said, 'Clive, sir, is a good thing to sit by: she always understands what you say.' And she said of him, 'I love to sit by Dr. Johnson: he always entertains me.' One night, when 'The Recruiting Officer' was acted, he said to Mr. Holland, who had been expressing an apprehension that Dr. Johnson would disdain the works of Farquhar; 'No, sir; I think Farquhar a man whose writings have considerable merit.'"

"His friend Garrick was so busy in conducting the drama that they could not have so much intercourse as Mr. Garrick used to profess an anxious wish that there should be'. There might, indeed, be something in the contemptuous severity as to the merit of acting, which his old preceptor nourished in himself, that would mortify Garrick after the great applause which he received from the audience. For though Johnson

<sup>2</sup> [In a letter written by Johnson to a friend in Jan. 1742—3, he says, "I never see Garrick." M.]



said of him, 'Sir, a man who has a nation to admire him every night may well be expected to be somewhat elated : ' yet he would treat theatrical matters with a ludicrous slight. He mentioned one evening, 'I met David coming off the stage, dressed in a woman's riding hood, when he acted in *The Wonder* ; I came full upon him, and I believe he was not pleased.' "

" Once he asked Tom Davies, whom he saw dressed in a fine suit of clothes, 'And what art thou to-night?' Tom answered 'The Thane of Ross' (which it will be recollected is a very inconsiderable character). 'O brave!' said Johnson."

" Of Mr. Longley, at Rochester, a gentleman of very considerable learning, whom Dr. Johnson met there, he said, 'My heart warms towards him. I was surprised to find in him such a nice acquaintance with the metre in the learned languages : though I was somewhat mortified that I had it not so much to myself, as I should have thought.' "

" Talking of the minuteness with which people will record the sayings of eminent persons, a story was told, that when Pope was on a visit to Spence at Oxford, as they looked from the window they saw a Gentleman Commoner, who was just come in from riding, amusing himself with whipping at a post. Pope took occasion to say, 'That young gentleman seems to have little to do.' Mr. Beauchamp observed, 'Then, to be sure, Spence turned round and wrote that down ;' and went on to say to Dr. Johnson, 'Pope, sir, would have said the same of you, if he had seen you distilling.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, if Pope had told me of my distilling, I would have told him of his grotto.' "

" He would allow no settled indulgence of idleness upon principle, and always repelled every

attempt to urge excuses for it. A friend one day suggested, that it was not wholesome to study soon after dinner. JOHNSON. 'Ah, sir, don't give way to such a fancy. At one time of my life I had taken it into my head that it was not wholesome to study between breakfast and dinner.'"

"Mr. Beauclerk one day repeated to Dr. Johnson Pope's lines,

'Let modest Foster, if he will, excel  
Ten metropolitans in preaching well:'

Then asked the Doctor, 'Why did Pope say this?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, he hoped it would vex somebody.'"

"Dr. Goldsmith, upon occasion of Mrs. Lennox's bringing out a play<sup>1</sup>, said to Dr. Johnson at the CLUB, that a person had advised him to go and hiss it, because she had attacked Shakspeare in her book called 'Shakspeare Illustrated.' JOHNSON. 'And did not you tell him that he was a rascal?' GOLDSMITH. 'No, sir, I did not. Perhaps he might not mean what he said.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, sir, if he lied, it is a different thing.' Colman sily said (but it is believed Dr. Johnson did not hear him), 'Then the proper expression should have been,—Sir, if you don't lie, you're a rascal.'"

"His affection for Topham Beauclerk was so great that, when Beauclerk was labouring under that severe illness which at last occasioned his death, Johnson said (with a voice faltering with emotion), 'Sir, I would walk to the extent of the diameter of the earth to save Beauclerk.'"

<sup>1</sup> [Probably "The Sisters," a comedy performed one night only, at Covent Garden, in 1769. Dr. Goldsmith wrote an excellent epilogue to it.—Mrs. Lennox, whose maiden name was Ramsay, died in London in distressed circumstances, in her eighty-fourth year, January 4, 1804. M.]

"One night at the CLUB he produced a translation of an Epitaph which Lord Elibank had written in English, for his Lady, and requested of Johnson to turn it into Latin for him. Having read *Domina de North et Gray*, he said to Dyer<sup>2</sup>, 'You see, sir, what barbarism we are compelled to make use of when modern titles are to be specifically mentioned in Latin inscriptions.' When he had read it once aloud, and there had been a general approbation expressed by the company, he addressed himself to Mr. Dyer in particular, and said, 'Sir, I beg to have your judgment, for I know your nicety.' Dyer then very properly desired to read it over again; which having done, he pointed out an incongruity in one of the sentences. Johnson immediately assented to the observation, and said, 'Sir, this is owing to an alteration of a part of the sentence, from the form in which I had first written it; and I believe, sir, you may have remarked, that the making a partial change, without a due regard to the general structure of the sentence, is a very frequent cause of error in composition.'"

"Johnson was well acquainted with Mr. Dossie, authour of a treatise on Agriculture; and said of him, 'Sir, of the objects which the Society of Arts have chiefly in view, the chymical effects of bodies operating upon other bodies, he knows more than almost any man.' Johnson, in order to give Mr. Dossie his vote to be a member of this Society, paid up an arrear which had run on for two years. On this occasion he mentioned a circumstance, as characteristick of the Scotch. 'One of that nation (said he) who had been a candidate, against whom I had voted, came up to me with a civil salutation. Now, sir, this is their way. An Englishman would have stomached

<sup>2</sup> [See vol. i. p. 26. M.]

it, and been sulky, and never have taken further notice of you; but a Scotchman, sir, though you vote nineteen times against him; will accost you with equal complaisance after each time, and the twentieth time, sir, he will get your vote.”

“Talking on the subject of toleration, one day when some friends were with him in his study, he made his usual remark, that the State has a right to regulate the religion of the people; who are the children of the State. A clergyman having readily acquiesced in this, Johnson, who loved discussion, observed, ‘But, sir, you must go round to other States than our own. You do not know what a Bramin has to say for himself’. In short, sir, I have got no further than this: Every man has a right to utter what he thinks truth, and every other man has a right to knock him down for it. Martyrdom is the test.”

“A man, he observed, should begin to write soon; for, if he waits till his judgment is matured, his inability, through want of practice to express his conceptions, will make the disproportion so great, between what he sees and what he can attain, that he will probably be discouraged from writing at all. As a proof of the justness of this remark, we may instance what is related of the great Lord Granville<sup>4</sup>; that after he had written his letter giving an account of the battle of Dettingen, he said, ‘Here is a letter, expressed in terms not good enough for a tallowchandler to have used.’”

“Talking of a Court-martial that was sitting upon a very momentous publick occasion, he ex-

<sup>3</sup> Here Lord Macartney remarks, “A Bramin or any cast of the Hindoos will neither admit you to be of their religion nor be converted to yours:—a thing which struck the Portuguese with the greatest astonishment, when they first discovered the East Indies.”

<sup>4</sup> [John; the first Earl Granville, who died, January 2, 1763. M.]

pressed much doubt of an enlightened decision; and said, that perhaps there was not a member of it, who, in the whole course of his life, had ever spent an hour by himself in balancing probabilities."

"Goldsmith one day brought to the CLUB a printed Ode, which he, with others, had been hearing read by its authour in a publick room, at the rate of five shillings each for admission. One of the company having read it aloud, Dr. Johnson said, 'Bolder words and more timorous meaning, I think, never were brought together.'"

"Talking of Gray's Odes, he said, 'They are forced plants, raised in a hotbed; and they are poor plants; they are but cucumbers after all.' A gentleman present, who had been running down Ode-writing in general, as a bad species of poetry, unluckily said, 'Had they been literally cucumbers, they had been better things than Odes.'—'Yes, sir (said Johnson), for a *hog*.'"

"His distinction of the different degrees of attainment of learning was thus marked upon two occasions. Of Queen Elizabeth he said, 'She had learning enough to have given dignity to a bishop;' and of Mr. Thomas Davies he said, 'Sir, Davies has learning enough to give credit to a clergyman.'"

"He used to quote, with great warmth, the saying of Aristotle recorded by Diogenes Laertius; that there was the same difference between one learned and unlearned as between the living and the dead."

"It is very remarkable, that he retained in his memory very slight and trivial, as well as important things. As an instance of this, it seems that an inferior domestick of the Duke of Leeds had attempted to celebrate his Grace's marriage in such homely rhymes as he could make; and this

curious composition having been sung to Dr. Johnson, he got it by heart, and used to repeat it in a very pleasant manner. Two of the stanzas were these:

‘When the Duke of Leeds shall married be  
To a fine young lady of high quality,  
How happy will that gentlewoman be  
In his Grace of Leeds’s good company.

She shall have all that’s fine and fair,  
And the best of silk and satin shall wear;  
And ride in a coach to take the air,  
And have a house in St. James’s Square<sup>5</sup>.

To hear a man, of the weight and dignity of Johnson, repeating such humble attempts at poetry, had a very amusing effect. He, however, seriously observed of the last stanza repeated by him, that it nearly comprised all the advantages that wealth can give.”

“An eminent foreigner, when he was shown the British Museum, was very troublesome with many absurd inquiries. ‘Now there, sir (said he), is the difference between an Englishman and a Frenchman. A Frenchman must be always

<sup>5</sup> The correspondent of the Gentleman’s Magazine, who subscribes himself SCIOLUS, furnishes the following supplement:

“A lady of my acquaintance remembers to have heard her uncle sing those homely stanzas more than forty-five years ago. He repeated the second thus:

She shall breed young lords and ladies fair,  
And ride abroad in a coach and three pair,  
And the best, &c.  
And have a house, &c.

And remembered a third which seems to have been the introductory one, and is believed to have been the only remaining one:

When the Duke of Leeds shall have made his choise  
Of a charming young lady that’s beautiful and wise,  
She’ll be the happiest young gentlewoman under the skies,  
As long as the sun and moon shall rise,  
And how happy shall, &c.”

It is with pleasure I add that this stanza could never be more truly applied than at this present time [1792].

talking, whether he knows any thing of the matter or not; an Englishman is content to say nothing, when he has nothing to say."

"His unjust contempt for foreigners was, indeed, extreme. One evening, at Old Slaughter's coffee-house, when a number of them were talking loud about little matters, he said, 'Does not this confirm old Meynell's observation—*For any thing I see, foreigners are fools?*'"

"He said, that once, when he had a violent toothach, a Frenchman accosted him thus: '*Ah, monsieur, vous étudiez trop.*'"

"Having spent an evening at Mr. Langton's, with the Reverend Dr. Parr, he was much pleased with the conversation of that learned gentleman; and, after he was gone, said to Mr. Langton, 'Sir, I am obliged to you for having asked me this evening. Parr is a fair man'. I do not know when I have had an occasion of such free controversy. It is remarkable how much of a man's life may pass without meeting with any instance of this kind of open discussion."

"We may fairly institute a criticism between Shakspeare and Corneille, as they both had, though in a different degree, the lights of a latter age. It is not so just between the Greek dramatick writers and Shakspeare. It may be replied to what is said by one of the remarkers on Shakspeare, that though Darius's shade had *prescience*, it does not necessarily follow that he had all *past* particulars revealed to him."

"Spanish plays, being wildly and improbably farcical, would please children here, as children

<sup>6</sup> [When the Corporation of Norwich applied to Johnson to point out to them a proper master for their Grammar School, he recommended Dr. Parr, on his ceasing to be usher to Sumner at Harrow. B.]

are entertained with stories full of prodigies; their experience not being sufficient to cause them to be so readily startled at deviations from the natural course of life. The machinery of the Pagans is uninteresting to us: when a Goddess appears in Homer or Virgil, we grow weary; still more so in the Grecian tragedies; as in that kind of composition a nearer approach to Nature is intended.—Yet there are good reasons for reading romances; as—the fertility of invention, the beauty of style and expression, the curiosity of seeing with what kind of performances the age and country in which they were written was delighted; for it is to be apprehended, that at the time when very wild improbable tales were well received, the people were in a barbarous state, and so on the footing of children, as has been explained.”

“It is evident enough that no one who writes now can use the Pagan deities and mythology; the only machinery, therefore, seems that of ministering spirits; the ghosts of the departed, witches, and fairies, though these latter, as the vulgar superstition concerning them (which, while in its force, infected at least the imagination of those that had more advantage in education, though their reason set them free from it) is every day wearing out, seem likely to be of little further assistance in the machinery of poetry. As I recollect, Hammond introduces a hag or witch into one of his love elegies, where the effect is unmeaning and disgusting.”

“The man who uses his talent of ridicule in creating or grossly exaggerating the instances he gives, who imputes absurdities that did not happen, or when a man was a little ridiculous, describes him as having been very much so, abuses his talents greatly. The great use of delineating



absurdities is, that we may know how far human folly can go; the account, therefore, ought of absolute necessity to be faithful. A certain character (naming the person) as to the general cast of it, is well described by Garrick, but a great deal of the phraseology he uses in it is quite his own, particularly in the proverbial comparisons, 'obstinate as a pig, &c. but I don't know whether it might not be true of Lord ———, that from a too great eagerness of praise and popularity, and a politeness carried to a ridiculous excess, he was likely after asserting a thing in general, to give it up again in parts. For instance, if he had said Reynolds was the first of painters, he was capable enough of giving up, as objections might happen to be severally made, first, his outline,—then the grace in form,—then the colouring, and lastly, to have owned that he was such a mannerist that the disposition of his pictures was all alike."

"For hospitality, as formerly practised, there is no longer the same reason; heretofore the poorer people were more numerous, and from want of commerce, their means of getting a livelihood more difficult; therefore the supporting them was an act of great benevolence; now that the poor can find maintenance for themselves, and their labour is wanted, a general undiscerning hospitality tends to ill, by withdrawing them from their work to idleness and drunkenness. Then, formerly rents were received in kind, so that there was a great abundance of provisions in possession of the owners of the lands, which, since the plenty of money afforded by commerce, is no longer the case."

"Hospitality to strangers and foreigners in our country is now almost at an end, since, from the increase of them that come to us, there have been

a sufficient number of people that have found an interest in providing inns and proper accommodations, which is in general a more expedient method for the entertainment of travellers. Where the travellers and strangers are few, more of that hospitality subsists, as it has not been worth while to provide places of accommodation. In Ireland there is still hospitality to strangers, in some degree; in Hungary and Poland probably more."

"Colman, in a note on his translation of Terence, talking of Shakspeare's learning, asks, 'What says Farmer to this? What says Johnson?' Upon this he observed, 'Sir, let Farmer answer for himself: *I never engaged in this controversy. I always said, Shakspeare had Latin enough to grammaticise his English.*'"

"A clergyman, whom he characterized as one who loved to say little oddities, was affecting one day, at a Bishop's table, a sort of slyness and freedom not in character, and repeated, as if part of 'The Old Man's Wish,' a song by Dr. Walter Pope, a verse bordering on licentiousness. Johnson rebuked him in the finest manner, by first showing him that he did not know the passage he was aiming at, and thus humbling him: 'Sir, that is not the song: it is thus.' And he gave it right. Then looking steadfastly on him, 'Sir, there is a part of that song which I should wish to exemplify in my own life:

'May I govern my passions with absolute sway!'"

"Being asked if Barnes knew a good deal of Greek, he answered, 'I doubt, sir, he was *unoculus inter cæcos*.'"

<sup>7</sup> [Johnson, in his *Life of Milton*, after mentioning that great poet's extraordinary fancy that the world was in its decay, and that his book was to be written in an age too late for heroic poesy, thus concludes: "However inferior to the heroes who were born in better

"He used frequently to observe, that men might be very eminent in a profession, without our perceiving any particular power of mind in them in conversation. 'It seems strange (said he) that a man should see so far to the right, who sees so short a way to the left. Burke is the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topick you please, he is ready to meet you.'"

"A gentleman, by no means deficient in literature, having discovered less acquaintance with one of the Classicks than Johnson expected, when the gentleman left the room, he observed, 'You see, now, how little any body reads.' Mr. Langton happening to mention his having read a good deal in Clenardus's Greek Grammar, 'Why, sir (said he), who is there in this town who knows any thing of Clenardus but you and I?' And upon Mr. Langton's mentioning that he had taken the pains to learn by heart the Epistle of St. Basil, which is given in that Grammar as a praxis, 'Sir (said he), I never made such an effort to attain Greek.'"

"Of Dodsley's 'Publick Virtue, a Poem,' he said, 'It was fine *blank* (meaning to express his usual contempt for blank verse): however, this miserable poem did not sell, and my poor friend Doddy said, Publick Virtue was not a subject to interest the age.'"

"Mr. Langton, when a very young man, read Dodsley's 'Cleone, a Tragedy,' to him, not aware of his extreme impatience to be read to. As it went on he turned his face to the back of his

ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity: he might still be a giant among the pigmies, *the one-eyed monarch of the blind.*"  
J. B.—O.]

chair, and put himself into various attitudes, which marked his uneasiness. At the end of an act, however, he said, 'Come let's have some more, let's go into the slaughterhouse again, Lanky. But I am afraid there is more blood than brains.' Yet he afterwards said, 'When I heard you read it, I thought higher of its power of language: when I read it myself, I was more sensible of its pathetick effect;' and then he paid it a compliment which many will think very extravagant. 'Sir (said he), if Otway had written this play, no other of his pieces would have been remembered.' Dodsley himself, upon this being repeated to him, said, 'It was too much: it must be remembered, that Johnson always appeared not to be sufficiently sensible of the merit of Otway<sup>s</sup>."

" 'Snatches of reading (said he) will not make a Bentley or a Clarke. They are, however, in a certain degree advantageous. I would put a child into a library (where no unfit books are); and let him read at his choice. A child should not be discouraged from reading any thing that he takes a liking to, from a notion that it is above his reach. If that be the case, the child will soon find out and desist; if not, he of course gains the instruction; which is so much the more likely to come, from the inclination with which he takes up the study.'"

" 'Though he used to censure carelessness with great vehemence, he owned that he once, to avoid the trouble of locking up five guineas, hid them, he forgot where, so that he could not find them.'"

" 'A gentleman who introduced his brother to

<sup>s</sup> [This assertion concerning Johnson's insensibility to the pathetic powers of Otway is too *round*. I once asked him, whether he did not think Otway frequently tender; when he answered, "Sir, he is all tenderness." B.]

Dr. Johnson was earnest to recommend him to the Doctor's notice, which he did by saying—'When we have sat together some time, you'll find my brother grow very entertaining.'—'Sir (said Johnson), I can wait.'"

"When the rumour was strong that we should have a war, because the French would assist the Americans, he rebuked a friend with some asperity for supposing it, saying, 'No, sir, national faith is not yet sunk so low.'"

"In the latter part of his life, in order to satisfy himself whether his mental faculties were impaired, he resolved that he would try to learn a new language, and fixed upon the Low Dutch for that purpose, and this he continued till he had read about one-half of 'Thomas à Kempis;' and finding that there appeared no abatement of his power of acquisition, he then desisted, as thinking the experiment had been duly tried. Mr. Burke justly observed that this was not the most vigorous trial, Low Dutch being a language so near to our own; had it been one of the languages entirely different, he might have been very soon satisfied."

"Mr. Langton and he having gone to see a Freemason's funeral procession, when they were at Rochester, and some solemn musick being played on French horns, he said, 'This is the first time that I have ever been affected by musical sounds; adding, 'that the impression made upon him was of a melancholy kind.' Mr. Langton saying, that this effect was a fine one; JOHNSON. 'Yes, if it softens the mind so as to prepare it for the reception of salutary feelings, it may be good; but inasmuch as it is melancholy *per se*, it is bad.'"

<sup>9</sup> [The French horn, however, is so far from being melancholy *per se*, that when the strain is light, and in the field, there is nothing.

“Goldsmith had long a visionary project that some time or other, when his circumstances should be easier, he would go to Aleppo, in order to acquire a knowledge, as far as might be, of any arts peculiar to the East, and introduce them into Britain. When this was talked of in Dr. Johnson’s company, he said, ‘Of all men Goldsmith is the most unfit to go out upon such an inquiry; for he is utterly ignorant of such arts as we already possess, and consequently could not know what would be accessions to our present stock of mechanical knowledge. Sir, he would bring home a grinding-barrow, which you see in every street in London, and think that he had furnished a wonderful improvement.’”

“‘Greek, sir (said he) is like lace; every man gets as much of it as he can.’”

“When Lord Charles Hay, after his return from America, was preparing his defence to be offered to the Court Martial which he had demanded, having heard Mr. Langton as high in expressions of admiration of Johnson as he usually was, he requested that Dr. Johnson might be introduced to him; and Mr. Langton having mentioned it to Johnson, he very kindly and readily agreed; and being presented by Mr. Langton to his Lordship, while under arrest, he saw him several times; upon one of which occasions Lord Charles read to him what he had prepared, which Johnson signified his approbation of, saying, ‘It is a very good soldierly defence.’ Johnson said, that he had advised his Lordship

so cheerful! It was the funeral occasion, and probably the solemnity of the strain that produced the plaintive effect here mentioned. B.]

1. [It should be remembered that this was said twenty-five or thirty years ago, when lace was very generally worn. M.]

that as it was in vain to contend with those who were in possession of power, if they would offer him the rank of Lieutenant General and a government, it would be better judged to desist from urging his complaints. It is well known that his Lordship died before the sentence was made known."

"Johnson one day gave high praise to Dr. Bentley's verses<sup>2</sup> in Dodsley's Collection, which

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Johnson, in his *Life of Cowley*, says that these are "the only English verses which Bentley is known to have written." I shall here insert them, and hope my readers will apply them.

"Who strives to mount Parnassus' hill,  
And thence poetick laurels bring,  
Must first acquire due force and skill,  
Must fly with swan's or eagle's wing.

Who Nature's treasures would explore;  
Her mysteries and arcana know;  
Must high as lofty Newton soar,  
Must stoop as delving Woodward low.

Who studies ancient laws and rites,  
Tongues, arts, and arms, and history;  
Must drudge, like Selden, days and nights,  
And in the endless labour die.

Who travels in religious jars,  
(Truth mixt with error, shades with rays),  
Like Whiston, wanting pyx or stars,  
In ocean wide or sinks or strays.

But grant our hero's hope long toil  
And comprehensive genius crown,  
All sciences, all arts his spoil,  
Yet what reward, or what renown?

Envy, innate in vulgar souls,  
Envy steps in and stops his rise;  
Envy with poison'd tarnish fouls  
His lustre, and his worth decries.

He lives inglorious or in want,  
To college and old books confined:  
Instead of learn'd, he's call'd pedant;  
Dunces advanced, he's left behind:  
Yet left content, a genuine Stoick he,  
Great without patron, rich without South Sea."

[A different and probably a more accurate copy of these spirited verses is to be found in "The Grove, or a Collection of Original

he recited with his usual energy. Dr. Adam Smith, who was present, observed in his decisive professorial manner, 'Very well—Very well.'—Johnson however added, 'Yes, they *are* very well, sir; but you may observe in what manner they are well. They are the forcible verses of a man of a strong mind, but not accustomed to write verse; for there is some uncouthness in the expression.'"

"Drinking tea one day at Garrick's with Mr. Langton, he was questioned if he was not somewhat of a heretick as to Shakspeare; said Garrick, 'I doubt he is a little of an infidel.'—'Sir (said Johnson), I will stand by the lines I have written on Shakspeare in my Prologue at the opening of your Theatre.' Mr. Langton suggested that in the line

'And panting Time toil'd after him in vain,'

Johnson might have had in his eye the passage in the 'Tempest,' where Prospero says of Miranda,

'————— She will outstrip all praise,  
And make it halt behind her.'

Johnson said nothing. Garrick then ventured to

Poems and Translations," &c. 1721. In this miscellany the last stanza, which in Dodsley's copy is unquestionably uncouth, is thus exhibited:

"*Inglorious or by wants inthrall'd,  
To college and old books confined;  
A pedant from his learning call'd,  
Dunces advanced, he's left behind.*"

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<sup>3</sup> The difference between Johnson and Smith is apparent even in this slight instance. Smith was a man of extraordinary application, and had his mind crowded with all manner of subjects; but the force, acuteness, and vivacity of Johnson were not to be found there. He had bookmaking so much in his thoughts, and was so chary of what might be turned to account in that way, that he once said to Sir Joshua Reynolds that he made it a rule when in company never to talk of what he understood. Beauclerk had for a short time a pretty high opinion of Smith's conversation. Garrick, after listening to him for a while, as to one of whom his expectations had been raised, turned slyly to a friend and whispered him, "What say you to this?—eh? *flabby*, I think."



observe, 'I do not think that the happiest line in the praise of Shakspeare.' Johnson exclaimed (smiling), 'Prosaical rogues! next time I write, I'll make both time and space pant!'"

"It is well known that there was formerly a rude custom for those who were sailing upon the Thames to accost each other, as they passed, in the most abusive language they could invent, generally, however, with as much satirical humour as they were capable of producing. Addison gives a specimen of this ribaldry in Number 383. of 'The Spectator,' when Sir Roger de Coverly and he are going to Spring Garden. Johnson was once eminently successful in this species of contest: a fellow having attacked him with some coarse raillery, Johnson answered him thus, 'Sir, your wife, *under pretence of keeping a bawdy-house*, is a receiver of stolen goods.' One evening when he and Mr. Burke and Mr. Langton were in company together, and the admirable scolding of Timon of Athens was mentioned, this instance of Johnson's was quoted, and thought to have at least equal excellence."

"As Johnson always allowed the extraordinary talents of Mr. Burke, so Mr. Burke was

\* I am sorry to see, in the "Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh," Vol. II. "An Essay on the Character of Hamlet," written, I should suppose, by a very young man, though called "Reverend;" who speaks with presumptuous petulance of the first literary character of his age. Amidst a cloudy confusion of words (which hath of late too often passed in Scotland for *Metaphysics*) he thus ventures to criticise one of the noblest lines in our language:—"Dr. Johnson has remarked, that 'time toiled after him in vain.' But I should apprehend that this is *entirely to mistake the character*. Time toils after every great man, as well as after Shakspeare. The workings of an ordinary mind keep pace, indeed, with time; they move no faster; they have their beginning, their middle, and their end; but superior natures can reduce these into a point. They do not, indeed, oppress them; but they suspend, or they lock them up in the breast." The learned Society, under whose sanction such gabbie is ushered into the world, would do well to offer a premium to any one who will discover its meaning.

fully sensible of the wonderful powers of Johnson. Mr. Langton recollects having passed an evening with both of them, when Mr. Burke repeatedly entered upon topics which it was evident he would have illustrated with extensive knowledge and richness of expression; but Johnson always seized upon the conversation, in which, however, he acquitted himself in a most masterly manner. As Mr. Burke and Mr. Langton were walking home, Mr. Burke observed that Johnson had been very great that night: Mr. Langton joined in this, but added, he could have wished to hear more from another person (plainly intimating that he meant Mr. Burke). 'O, no (said Mr. Burke), it is enough for me to have rung the bell to him.'

"Beauclerk having observed to him of one of their friends, that he was awkward at counting money; 'Why, sir (said Johnson), I am likewise awkward at counting money. But then, sir, the reason is plain; I have had very little money to count.'"

"He had an abhorrence of affectation. Talking of old Mr. Langton, of whom he said, 'Sir, you will seldom see such a gentleman, such are his stories of literature, such his knowledge in divinity, and such his exemplary life;' he added, 'and, sir, he has no grimace, no gesticulation, no bursts of admiration on trivial occasions; he never embraces you with an overacted cordiality.'"

"Being in company with a gentleman who thought fit to maintain Dr. Berkeley's ingenious philosophy, that nothing exists but as perceived by some mind; when the gentleman was going away, Johnson said to him, 'Pray, sir, don't leave us; for we may, perhaps, forget to think of you, and then you will cease to exist.'"

"Goldsmith, upon being visited by Johnson

one day in the Temple, said to him with a little jealousy of the appearance of his accommodation, 'I shall soon be in better chambers than these.' Johnson at the same time checked him and paid him a handsome compliment, implying that a man of his talents should be above attention to such distinctions,—'Nay, sir, never mind that. *Nil te quæsiveris extra.*'"

"At the time when his pension was granted to him, he said, with a noble literary ambition, 'Had this happened twenty years ago, I should have gone to Constantinople to learn Arabick, as Pockocke did.'"

"As an instance of the niceness of his taste, though he praised West's translation of Pindar, he pointed out the following passages as faulty, by expressing a circumstance so minute as to detract from the general dignity which should prevail :

'Down then from thy glittering nail  
Take, O muse, thy Dorian lyre.'"

"When Mr. Vesey<sup>5</sup> was proposed as a member of the Literary Club, Mr. Burke began by saying that he was a man of gentle manners. 'Sir (said Johnson), you need say no more. When you have said a man of gentle manners, you have said enough.'"

"The late Mr. Fitzherbert told Mr. Langton that Johnson said to him, 'Sir, a man has no more right to *say* an uncivil thing than to *act* one; no more right to say a rude thing to another than to knock him down.'"

"My dear friend Dr. Bathurst (said he, with a warmth of approbation) declared, he was glad that his father, who was a West Indian planter,

<sup>5</sup> [The Right Honourable Agmondesham Vesey was elected a member of the Literary Club in 1773, and died in 1784. M.]

had left his affairs in total ruin, because, having no estate, he was not under the temptation of having slaves.”

“Richardson had little conversation, except about his own works, of which Sir Joshua Reynolds said he was always willing to talk, and glad to have them introduced. Johnson, when he carried Mr. Langton to see him, professed that he could bring him out into conversation, and used this allusive expression, ‘Sir, I can make him rear.’ But he failed; for in that interview Richardson said little else than that there lay in the room a translation of his *Clarissa* into German<sup>6</sup>.”

“Once when somebody produced a newspaper in which there was a letter of stupid abuse of Sir Joshua Reynolds, of which Johnson himself came in for a share,—‘Pray (said he), let us have it read aloud from beginning to end;’ which being done, he with a ludicrous earnestness, and not directing his look to any particular person, called out, ‘Are we alive after all this satire!’”

“He had a strong prejudice against the political character of Secker, one instance of which appeared at Oxford, where he expressed great dissatisfaction at his varying the old established toast, ‘Church and King.’ ‘The Archbishop of

<sup>6</sup> A literary lady has favoured me with a characteristick anecdote of Richardson. One day at his country house at Northend, where a large company was assembled at dinner, a gentleman who was just returned from Paris, willing to please Mr. Richardson, mentioned to him a very flattering circumstance,—that he had seen his *Clarissa* lying on the King’s brother’s table. Richardson observing that part of the company were engaged in talking to each other, affected then not to attend to it. But by and by, when there was a general silence, and he thought that the flattery might be fully heard, he addressed himself to the gentleman, ‘I think, sir, you were saying something about,—’ pausing in a high flutter of expectation. The gentleman, provoked at his inordinate vanity, resolved not to indulge it, and with an exquisitely sly air of indifference answered, ‘A mere trifle, sir, not worth repeating.’ The mortification of Richardson was visible, and he did not speak ten words more the whole day. Dr. Johnson was present, and appeared to enjoy it much.

Canterbury,' said he (with an affected, smooth, smiling grimace), drinks 'Constitution in Church and State.' Being asked what difference there was between the two toasts, he said, 'Why, sir, you may be sure he meant something.' Yet when the life of that prelate, prefixed to his sermons by Dr. Porteus and Dr. Stinton, his chaplains, first came out, he read it with the utmost avidity, and said, 'It is a life well written, and that well deserves to be recorded.'"

"Of a certain noble Lord, he said, 'Respect him you could not; for he had no mind of his own. Love him you could not; for that which you could do with him, every one else could.'"

"Of Dr. Goldsmith he said, 'No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had.'"

"He told in his lively manner the following literary anecdote: 'Green and Guthrie, an Irishman and a Scotchman, undertook a translation of Duhalde's History of China. Green said of Guthrie, that he knew no English, and Guthrie of Green, that he knew no French; and these two undertook to translate Duhalde's History of China. In this translation there was found 'the twenty-sixth day of the new moon.' Now as the whole age of the moon is but twenty-eight days, the moon, instead of being new, was nearly as old as it could be. The blunder arose from their mistaking the word *neuvième* ninth, for *nouvelle* or *neuve*, new.'"

"Talking of Dr. Blagden's copiousness and precision of communication, Dr. Johnson said, 'Blagden, sir, is a delightful fellow.'"

"On occasion of Dr. Johnson publishing his pamphlet of 'The False Alarm,' there came out a very angry answer (by many supposed to be by Mr. Wilkes). Dr. Johnson determined on not

answering it; but, in conversation with Mr. Langton, mentioned a particular or two, which if he *had* replied to it, he might perhaps have inserted.—In the answerer's pamphlet, it had been said with solemnity, 'Do you consider, sir, that a House of Commons is to the people as a creature is to its Creator?' 'To this question,' said Dr. Johnson, 'I could have replied that—in the first place—the idea of a CREATOR must be such as that he has a power to unmake or annihilate his creature.'

"Then it cannot be conceived that a creature can make laws for its CREATOR?"

"Depend upon it, said he, that if a man *talks* of his misfortunes, there is something in them that is not disagreeable to him; for where there is nothing but pure misery, there never is any recourse to the mention of it."

"A man must be a poor beast that should *read* no more in quantity than he could *utter* aloud."

"Imlac in 'Rasselas,' I spelt with a *c* at the end, because it is less like English, which should always have the Saxon *k* added to the *c*<sup>s</sup>."

"Many a man is mad in certain instances, and goes through life without having it perceived:—for example, a madness has seized a person of supposing himself obliged literally to pray continually; had the madness turned the opposite way, and the person thought it a crime ever to

<sup>7</sup> His profound adoration of the GREAT FIRST CAUSE was such as to set him above that "Philosophy and vain deceit," with which men of narrow conceptions have been infected. I have heard him strongly maintain that "what is right is not so from any natural fitness, but because God wills it to be right;" and it is certainly so, because he has predisposed the relations of things so as that which he wills must be right. BOSWELL.

<sup>8</sup> I hope the authority of the great Master of our language will stop that curtailing innovation by which we see *critic*, *public*, &c. frequently written instead of *critick*, *publick*, &c.



alms from a *man*, though there should be no marks of wealth in his appearance, than from even a well dressed *woman*<sup>9</sup>; which he accounted for from the great degree of carefulness as to money, that is to be found in women; saying farther upon it, that the opportunities in general that they possess of improving their condition are much fewer than men have; and adding, as he looked round the company, which consisted of men only,—there is not one of us who does not think he might be richer, if he would use his endeavour.”

“He thus characterized an ingenious writer of his acquaintance: ‘Sir, he is an enthusiast by rule.’”

“*He may hold up that SHIELD against all his enemies;*”—was an observation on Homer, in reference to his description of the shield of Achilles, made by Mrs. Fitzherbert, wife to his friend Mr. Fitzherbert, of Derbyshire, and respected by Dr. Johnson as a very fine one. He had in general a very high opinion of that lady’s understanding.”

“An observation of Bathurst’s may be mentioned, which Johnson repeated, appearing to acknowledge it to be well founded; namely, it was somewhat remarkable how seldom, on occasion of coming into the company of any new person, one felt any wish or inclination to see him again.”

<sup>9</sup> Sterne is of a direct contrary opinion. See his “Sentimental Journey,” Article “*The Mystery*.” BOSWELL.